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MEMORABILIA

GLEANINGS
FROM FATHER WILBERFORCE'S
NOTE BOOKS

With an Introduction by
F. VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

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In Affectionate Memory
of the
Very Reverend Father Henry Bartlett, O.P.
Father Wilberforce's Novice-Master
Spiritual Director
and
Lifelong Friend

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INTRODUCTION

THE chief reason for publishing *The Life of Father Bertrand Wilberforce, O.P.*, was the apostolic wish to encourage souls by the example of a brother soul who made even his imperfection a stepping-stone towards union with God.

With this intent the Editor included in the book much that another editor might have withheld. But the touching gratitude of many who have been encouraged by the reading of the book has somewhat consoled those whose kindred or sympathy with Father Bertrand Wilberforce made them sensitive to the unveiling of his inner life.

If we have ventured to publish a little volume of his retreats, it is not that we are careless of their defects, which may, perhaps, have invaded even the region of grammar. Indeed, to the present writer it has seemed almost an affront to amend the shortcomings of notes which were not the quiet offspring of hours of leisure but the fire-welded outpouring of a soul wrestling nobly with itself in the ever deepening shadows of death. It has been easy to be careless of the manner of these meditations, on recognizing that in an age of literary exercises and fictional literature these meditations are as far from fiction as the *Following of Christ* is from the *Republic* of Plato. They are *real* meditations. To beginners in the spiritual life, that is, to souls whose tongues are still coated, and whose eyes are still overcast by the dust of this world, these meditations will, perhaps, have a curious taste and look of un-

reality. They will appear almost as academic as any deeply spiritual work, say, the *Mirror* of St Edmund of Abingdon. Men to whom real literature means such books as the *Odyssey* or the *Iliad*, or the *Stones of Venice*, or the *French Revolution*, will need something akin to a revolution of soul before realizing that these masterpieces belong largely to fiction, and that the dishevelled, dry, and autumn-withered notes of this book belong to the rare literature of reality.

For, to the writer of these meditations every thought had been a deed before it became a word. To those of us who know him, the reading of these " withered dreams " is a second painful autobiography. It is the bringing to light from the shadows of humility all those delicate principles which made a brave man struggle through the darkness of long years upwards towards morning. It would need no boldness to say that not one of these meditations was merely spoken or written. They were thought; and above all they were lived. They had been probably in the speaker's mind during his morning meditation; and some of us remember how Father Bertrand's many ailments made those morning meditations a wrestling which recalled the night-agony of his Master. If any one chooses to take this little book with him into the desert of a retreat he may do so in the full assurance of being companioned by no mere literary product, fashioned for sale in an hour of leisure, but by real meditations woven and dyed in the loom and vat of a brave man's thinking and doing.

Like all the great spiritual " athletes "—to use a quaint word from the Thebaid—Father Bertrand Wilberforce looked on a retreat as a time of spirit-

ual ασκησις or exercising. It was not dominantly a time of rest but of high spiritual activity. He looked upon death the terrible as always giving battle; and in the thought of inevitable death every hour of life became fateful as a crisis in existence. Every retreat he made became a preparation for death; and thereby a preparation for life. As the evening of his days drew in upon him, and he felt his soul challenged but not affrighted by the near view of the

Airless coasts of death

some of his yearly retreats, snatched from a ceaseless round of work, became a more formal and lowly acceptance of the challenge. He went into such retreats as a Home Fleet goes into port in time of war, to be overhauled before putting out to sea.

He himself may be allowed to teach the readers of this book in what spirit it must be used. His teaching will lose nothing by being couched in terse vigorous English.

" St Alphonsus says: ' If you want to do good to any soul teach it to make mental prayer, and our Lord will do the rest.'

" One great advantage of the Psalms is that they suit every soul in whatever state or stage of the spiritual life it may be. This is not the case with most meditation books. There is no more good in trying to put on other people's thoughts than in putting on their clothes. Neither thoughts nor clothes fit, and it is stupid to try to make them do so. It is quite impossible for a person in one state of mind to put on a long meditation written by another in quite a different state of mind. In

the Book of Kings we read that when David was going to fight Goliath, Saul insisted upon lending him his armour. Imagine a boy of thirteen or fourteen in the armour of an exceptionally tall man. Of course he could not wear it; and took it off."

These wise words are the fullest guide to souls anxious to make a retreat in company with this book. Whoever goes out into the desert of the spiritual exercises should go out to *pray*. God will do the rest. The notes of these meditations are not a path to follow blindly and passively, but the example of an earnest soul taking its own path and making its own headway. One Book alone has crown rights over the heart; all other books must explain and introduce it. It alone is the armoury wherein every soul may find its own armour which, if it chooses aright, will clothe and adorn it as the wings of the dove clothe and adorn the dove.

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

PART I.

Thoughts for Religious in Times of Retreat.

PART THE FIRST

Thoughts for Retreat

PREPARATION FOR RETREAT

I

LISTENING TO GOD

Read the tenth chapter of St Luke, vv. 38-42.

PUT yourself by an act of faith at the feet of Jesus, with Mary, to hear His Word.

Jesus speaks always in the Gospel: and in an admirable manner in the secret heart, for He is the Word of the Father, the Wisdom of the Father, containing all truth. We must open the ears of our soul to listen. "Thou, O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to the ear of Thy Servant" (2 Kings, vii, 27).

"Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, heard His Word," with tranquil and humble submission. She submitted her soul to the word of Jesus, the eternal Word, the eternal Truth, in silence, interior and exterior.

"There was silence in Heaven for about half an hour" (Apoc. viii, 1). Who spoke during that time? God only, for about half an hour. This deep silence, where all ceases, where all is quiet in God's presence, in Heaven, and in the higher part of the soul, cannot last long in this life. But if it only lasts a very short time how much does God say, and with what a lasting impression! Be attentive to His Word in your soul.

Generally those who belong to active Orders, have to "be busy about much serving." But now

in retreat, " Enter into thy chamber and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret" (Matt. vi, 6).

Enter into yourself and your own heart and be distracted by none. Let Martha serve alone, and do you listen to God. " Speak then, O Lord, Thy servant heareth " (1 Kings, iii, 10).

Speak! what sayest Thou? " Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but ONE THING is necessary." Is it not, then, necessary to discharge all one's duties and obediences? Without doubt. But be always calm and collected. And there are happy moments in which it is God's Will that you should put away all other duties, every other exercise, every other obedience, that you may devote yourself entirely to hearing the Word of God, to sitting at the feet of Jesus to hear His Word.

What is His Word to us? " *One thing is necessary.*" God only is *necessary;* all out of Him is nothing. " All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all, and are counted in His sight as nothing and vanity " (Isa. xl, 17). He is the one thing necessary in the highest sense. Him only should we desire, to Him only should we unite ourselves. All the rest is strange, this is our own, the foundation of man, all his being. Whatever you lose, if you lose not God, is not essential. We must, therefore, abandon all for God, and abandon all to God—into His hands.

II

GOD'S INVITATION

"O come let us exult in the Lord; let us rejoice before God our Saviour. Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving; and rejoice before Him with psalms" (Ps. xciv, 1, 2).

1. THUS does God, and the Church in His name, exhort and invite us to come into the presence of God, to exult, that is, to triumph, to be glad above measure, to rejoice, to thank Him, and to sing joyfully, because He is our Lord, our God, our Saviour. He is the Lord who rules us, God who made us, the Saviour who redeemed us and by His Holy Spirit sanctifies us. Our spirits, then, should exult in Him, we should rejoice because God is our Saviour, we should thank Him always and everywhere, especially now that we are to spend some time in His immediate presence in retreat, and we should sing joyfully to Him in psalms, "singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord."

2. Why? "For the Lord is a great God: and a great King above all gods: for in His hands are all the ends of the earth; and the heights of the mountains are His. The sea is His and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land" (Ps. xciv, 3, 5). He made all. He alone IS. He only is the Fountain of Life. All things, the teeming earth and the immense sea He made. They are His.

3. "O come (then), let us worship and fall down (in adoration), and weep (partly with joy at His greatness, partly with grief for our sins) before the Lord that made us, for He is the Lord *our* God and we are His; the people of His pasture

(we His sheep, and He our Shepherd), and the sheep of His Hand," who feeds us daily with the Bread of Life.

4. " To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts " (Ps. xciv, 8). *To-day:* now, in the time of retreat, when He is sure to speak to you, to each one of you, do not let His voice sound in your ears unheeded. To-day, now, is the time of grace. Every day is such, for we say this day by day. For how many years has this warning and exhortation been sounding daily in our ears, the Church saying, To-day, *at least now to-day*, if you shall hear His voice. And what day do you not hear it if you listen? Harden not your hearts. During the retreat God's voice will be heard, plainly heard, by all. Of that there is no doubt. He would not have called us into retreat if He had nothing to say to us, nothing He wanted us to hear.

5. The only doubt is whether we shall listen and obey. How often has He spoken to me before. I heard His voice, but did not attend. Now, reflect how rude, how unmannerly, how insulting this is to God. If you were called by your superior, or by the bishop, saying, " Come, I have something to say to you: listen," and you were to reply, " Not now, I have no time to listen, no wish to hear, I do not want to hear, lest I should have to do what I would rather not," how rude and insulting this would be thought! What, then, is it to treat God thus? The great God, the Lord God, says, " Listen, child, I have something to say," and you reply, " I can't listen. I do not want to hear, I have no time, no inclination. If I listen I may feel bound to do things I dislike—incon-

From hardness of heart & Contempt of Thy
Word & Commandment Good Lord (Jesus), deliver us.

venient things, penitential things." How often souls are wilfully deaf to the voice of God. This is to harden the heart. "Harden not your hearts."

6. Sometimes souls are not so much deliberately deaf to God's voice as simply inattentive, occupied so closely with other matters that His voice passes unheard. The world makes such a noise in their ears that they cannot hear. The world has hardened their hearts. It is a terrible evil to have a hard heart, into which the sweet, gentle voice of God's grace does not penetrate.

Is my heart hard: hard as the highway: hard as the barren rock? If so, if in any degree it has begun to harden, how must it be softened so as to become a garden of Eden in which God will delight, bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit? Meditation will soften it, for God will then speak. Listening to God with a good will to do what He asks—all He asks—will soften it. To be afraid of thinking, examining, praying, asking myself what is God's will—all this hardens the heart till it becomes like the nether millstone.

6. What is the result of hardening the heart when God speaks? The result is that we imitate the Jews in the desert. "As in the provocation, in the day of temptation, in the wilderness, where your fathers tempted me, proved me and saw my works" (Ps. xciv, 9).

"The provocation"—when by not listening and obeying they *provoked Him* to punish, to reject, to abandon them to their own devices. My whole life has been a provocation of God to abandon me. I justly deserve it. I am in the wilderness, *in viâ*, on my way to Heaven. Am I tempting God to withdraw from me? The Jews

tempted Him, proved Him to be loving and merciful, but also just and awful, and they saw His works of mercy and of justice. " Forty years long was I offended with that generation, and said: They do always err in their hearts. They have not known My ways, so I swore in My wrath that they shall not enter into My rest " (Ps. xciv, 10, 11).

" Forty years." God bears with some longer than others, but at last He abandons those who harden their hearts and will not listen to His voice. How long has He borne with me?

Two things God complained of in them:

(*a*) They have not known My ways. They did not think of God, study Him and love Him with their *minds*. (*b*) They always erred in their hearts, loving other things and self more than God. God, at last, swore in His wrath—His justice—that they should not enter into His rest.

Rejected. Apply this to us Religious, God's people. If we harden our hearts at last He will swear in His just wrath, that we shall not enter, when we die, into His rest. Pray that such words may never be said of you. Eternal rest give unto us, O Lord.

PURITY OF HEART

THE first thing necessary in the service of God is purity of heart, which means freedom from all sin, however small. Without this there can be no progress in love, which is sanctity. The first condition of friendship is not to wound or wilfully to offend the feelings of him we love.

This is why the purgative way and the thoughts that belong to it come first in the spiritual life. " It shall go well with him that feareth the Lord; in the days of his end (at death) he shall be blessed " (Ecclus. i, 13).

The success of a retreat depends on grace, and grace depends on prayer. Therefore, without prayer no success, no good can be hoped for. No one can make us pray; we must do it ourselves.

We must remember what theology teaches us about justification, both regarding sinners and those already in grace. Those in sin need the first grace of justification: those in grace need more justification.

1. The first movement of justification is the practical desire of salvation or perfection, that is, of God's love and of the means to gain it. Every one in retreat, then, should try to excite this desire in his soul. Desire is the first means of salvation and perfection. So we should meditate on things likely to excite this desire.

(St Alphonsus, instead of speaking first of indifference, speaks first of love, and then con-

cludes that to love God we must love His Will. It is the love of Christ, he says, that gives us perfect indifference.)

2. As fear is the principal means to make us humble and to make us pray (which two things bring the grace necessary to realize our good desires), we think of those truths that are the most likely to excite fear. We must remember that fear is not fright or panic, but rational, calm fear. In nuns and all good religious the fear should be a reverential fear of God, fear of offending Him, fear of separation from Him. This, surely, is the fear so highly praised in the first chapter of Ecclesiasticus, verses 11, 12, etc. For hardened sinners the fear of the lash of hell is indeed necessary as a first step. This fear comes from looking at self punished, and then it is " servile " fear; but when fear comes from looking at God it is " filial " fear.

3. Fear is only the first movement; we must not rest there, but go on at once to love. That " love is naturally prior to hatred " is a theological maxim. The saints tell us that love is not only a great motive of virtue, but of conversion. " Charity is the life of the virtues and the death of the vices; as wax melts before the flame, so do vices die out before charity " (St Bonaventure).

As St Alphonsus says, those who always hark back to love and make constant acts of it even in truths of the purgative way, go more according to the right order of justification.

4. Penance is necessary for all.

(*a*) To atone for grave sins, or at least for wilful, venial sins; (*b*) to break down the wall of reserve that stands between us and God. After repeated

sin, a certain reserve is formed on the part of God, which penance removes; (*c*) to purify the heart from attachments, especially from attachment to self. We should examine ourselves during retreat to see if we really do penance. All should be careful to make acts of contrition and compunction.*

5. We must remember the words of St Paul, " For him that draws near to God, it is necessary *to believe* " (Heb. xi, 6). Therefore during the retreat make many acts of faith.

(*a*) *Credere Deum:* His presence—in prayer—before meditation and mental prayer.

(*b*) *Credere in Deum:* Make often acts of faith in the truths on which you meditate.

(*c*) *Credere Deo:* Acts of confidence—in God—in our Lord, *Qui*, as the Council of Trent teaches, *est causa meritoria nostræ justificationis.*

In retreat dwell long on one thought. One holy thought, dwelt on till it makes a lasting, lifelong impression, is better than many considered lightly. Any one truth deeply considered will affect the whole of our life.

* Note. In preached retreats or missions it is well to make these acts in public, after the meditations or sermons, otherwise the people are left sitting and not *praying*.

GOD THE CENTRE OF ALL

"We shall say much, and yet shall want words; but the sum of our words is, He is All" (Ecclus. xliii, 29).

THIS is the great foundation of the spiritual life, "He is all."

When God commanded Moses to go in His Name to the children of Israel, Moses replied, "If they should say to me, What is His Name? What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I AM WHO AM. Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel; He who is hath sent me to you" (Exod. iii, 14).

If we have not a deep knowledge of God our spiritual life is sure to remain shallow, because it does not rest on the only true and solid foundation.

Our Lord, speaking to St Catherine of Siena, and instructing her in the spiritual life, said: "I will lay in your soul, My Daughter, two rocks as the foundation of the life of your soul. The first is, 'I am that which is,' and the second, 'Thou art that which is not.'"

These two great principles, that God is, and we are not—God's greatness and our nothingness—are the solid foundation of everything in the spiritual life, the explanation of every difficulty, the defence in every temptation. It is the forgetting this great double principle that causes all our ills. "The sum of our words is, HE IS ALL."

1. "Know ye that the Lord, He is God;
He made us and not we ourselves" (Ps. xcix, 3).

The Lord He is God. God is the one necessary Being; the only One of whom we can say in the true and full sense of the words: He is, He is of Himself.

God only is good. "One," said our Lord, "is good—God." For God only is good of Himself and in Himself: He only is His own goodness. Every created being, however great and exalted, has all its goodness from God, and holds it as His gift. Our Lady, or even the Human Nature, the Manhood of Christ Himself, has all goodness possessed by them as a gift from God. All I am, all I possess in body or in soul belongs to God, came from Him, is His free gift. "Doth He not see my ways, and number all my steps?" (Job xxxi) 4.

He is incomprehensible. He only can comprehend Himself, for to comprehend Him it is necessary to be equal to Him, and no created being can equal Him. He only is infinite. Our Lady's knowledge of God must, by the light of glory, be exceeding great. Who can measure the height, the depth, the breadth, the length of that knowledge? And yet, what Our Lady cannot comprehend in God is simply and absolutely infinite.

We speak of God as having various attributes, of having wisdom, power, righteousness, mercy, justice, but in reality God is Himself infinite Wisdom, Power, Righteousness, Mercy, Justice and the rest. He does not participate in these things, but He simply and absolutely *is* every perfection in an infinite degree.

God always is. He never began. He can never end. In Him there is no change or shadow of alteration. As He now is, so was He always, so will He ever be, the one changeless Being, without be-

ginning and without end, the origin and source of all being; He is all. "We shall say much and yet want words; but the sum of our words is, He is All!"

The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal, and yet there are not three Eternals, but one Eternal. "The Father is the eternal fountain of all being: the Son is born from Him for ever: the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son.

The Father is in the Son and the Holy Ghost: the Son is in the Father and the Holy Ghost: the Holy Ghost is in the Father and the Son. They are undivided because they are all one God, the same God.

There is no difference between them: there is only the distinction of origin. The Son is just as much from Himself as from the Father, although born of the Father, because He has the same nature, He is born necessarily because He is God. The Holy Ghost is of and by Himself, though proceeding from the Father and the Son, because He is God, the very God.

"Thee do we invoke, Thee do we adore, Thee do we praise, O Blessed Trinity. Thou art our hope, our salvation, our honour, O Blessed Trinity. Deliver us, save us, justify us, O Blessed Trinity." We acknowledge that Thou always art: and for Thee to be, to live and to understand, is always one and the same thing.

"From whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things."

2. "He made us and not we ourselves" (Ps. xcix, 3).

The second great fundamental truth: we are nothing, He is All. All we have He gave us, in body and soul. Nothing can be given or added to Him,

for He is All, we are nothing and have nothing except what He has given us. One is good—God. From Him is every good, for He made it. He is all good and He created all good outside Himself. Through Him are all things, through His wisdom, His goodness, His power. In Him are all things. He sees them, knows them, preserves and supports them by His power. If we have anything it is His. He made it, prepared it for us to do, gave it us. Have we done a good action? It is His.

" We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God has prepared that we should walk in them " (Eph. ii, 10).

" We are His workmanship." He made us by the Word of His power. " Created in Christ Jesus." He chose us in Him (in Christ Jesus), before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and without spot or blemish, in His sight, really and truly, in charity. So He the Father chose us in Him, the Son, that we might be holy in charity, the Holy Ghost.

All we have, then, is His: we are nothing. We have nothing. We can do nothing. We are of no value. He is All. Realize the teaching of St Paul (Eph. ii, 10). that all our good works have been prepared for us in Christ, prepared from all eternity. In Christ, because God chose us " in Him," before the foundation of this world: they were all prepared for us to do as members of Christ, not in a fatalistic sense, for they are prepared for us to walk (freely) in them. Only those works are good in His sight that were prepared for us in Christ. How careful must I be to walk in them ?

" Give what thou wilt; without Thee we are poor;
And rich with Thee, take what Thou wilt away."

OUR END

HE HATH CHOSEN US

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity" (Eph, i, 3, 4).

OUR Christian and religious vocation is set before our minds for meditation, with the utmost clearness in these words of St Paul.

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in Him before the foundation of the world."

(*a*) *Who chose us?* God, the Eternal, All-Wise, All-Powerful, All-Holy, chose us by a free act of His mind and Will. We did not exist in any way whatever, and were therefore less than a leaf blown from a tree, less than a grain of sand. But in the mind of God we were known always as possible, and by a free act of His Will, He chose to make us, and to give us actual being. We are His because He made us, we belong to Him because we are the creatures of His Will; we are what we are because such was His Will. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John xv, 16).

(*b*) *When did He choose us"?*

"Before the foundation of the world." That is, from all eternity, There never was a moment in which we were not perfectly known to Him, and in which He did not choose us and will to make us, with the various circumstances of time, place, etc.

which surround us. And although the number of creatures that He has made is to our minds so inconceivable and overwhelming, yet God, being infinite is not confused by that immense number, and can and does know us, and love us individually, as much as if we were the only beings in existence.

ADORE GOD, Who from eternity chose you out of nothing.

ASK PARDON for your sins, so full of ingratitude.

THANK HIM for His eternal choice.

Make many ACTS OF LOVE.

ASK Him to perfect the good work He has begun, and to choose you for glory.

(*c*) *In Whom did God choose us*?

In Jesus Christ our Lord. I am a member of Christ because I am in His Church, "which is His Body." It was good of the Infinite God, Who needs no one, to choose me when I was nothing, and to bring me into being, but how much more ought I to thank Him for choosing me to be a member of the hidden or mystical Body of His own Son! I had no right to exist. No right could I possibly have to be engrafted on the living Body of God the Son made Man, and thus to live by His Life, and to bring forth fruit for Eternal Life by His power. It was a perfectly gratuitous favour. If He had not chosen me I could not have complained, and now that He has chosen me in Him, how grateful should I be, and how generously and faithfully should I love Him.

But not only this. Though I belonged to Him by every title, He has allowed me to give myself to Him by a free and deliberate act, just as if I did not belong to Him before. At my religious pro-

fession my soul chose Him as its spouse for ever, and yet this, the most deliberate and voluntary act of my life, was the effect of God's gracious and loving election. He chose me for it in Christ, before the foundation of the world, and He graciously allowed me to come and make a freewill offering of myself to Him. Thus does a loving father give his little child a jewel, to come and present to him as a gift.

I adore Thee, O Infinite God, my Father. Thou art God, I am nothing; Thou art Light, I am darkness; Thou art the Creator, I am Thy creature made by Thy hand.

I am sorry from my heart for all my sins, and my ingratitude. Forgive me, loving Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore my Father, because Thou hast chosen me in Him.

I thank Thee for Thy immense and incomprehensible love which made Thee choose me in Him, before the foundation of the world.

I love Thee: I do love Thee, but I do not love Thee as I ought, make me love Thee more and more. Grant me to come to Thee, and be united to Thee for ever.

I am Thine; to Thee do I belong, because Thou hast made me, redeemed me, and dwelt within me. Save me then, O Lord, save me from sin, save me from myself, save me from hell. Though I have sinned, O Lord, still I have sought thee, and now seek Thy justifications, that is Thy Will, which justifies me, and makes me holy.

" Thine am I: O save me:
For I have sought and will seek Thy Will "
(Ps. cxviii. 94).

" Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light

unto my paths. I have sworn and am steadfastly determined to keep Thy righteous judgements" (Ps. cxviii, 105, 106).

"He chose us . . . that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity."

Here the Apostle tells us the reason why God chose us. The reason that He had in view, not the motive that moved Him to choose us, for that can be nothing but His own most holy Will. The only reason that we can assign for what God pleases to do, is His holy and adorable Will (cf. 1^a, 2^{ae}, 19, 5).

But St Paul in this verse explains the object for which God was pleased to choose us before the foundation of the world. It was that we, by His grace, might be "holy and unspotted in His sight in charity."

(*a*) *Holy*. This word implies that positive goodness in God's sight which comes from the practice of virtues, with His grace.

(*b*) *Unspotted*, which implies freedom from all wilful sin. Sin, even venial sin, may be looked on as a foul stain on the soul, spoiling its beauty, as the Holy Ghost says in Ecclesiasticus, "a lie is a foul blot upon a man." Freedom from deliberate sin clothes the soul with a supernatural splendour.

(*c*) *In His sight*. Our freedom from sin and beauty of virtue must be real and genuine, not only according to the opinion of men, but "in God's sight," that is truly and really. We must remember that the "eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts" (Ecclus. xxiii. 28).

(*d*) *In charity*. His choice of us to be members of Christ is an act of pure love, and He chose us that we might love Him and do His Will in order to please Him. He chose us from eternity that we might be made one with Him by Love.

Adore God, the undivided Trinity, choosing you from eternity.

Ask Pardon for not having led a life unspotted by freedom from sin, and holy by the exercise of virtue.

Thank God for having chosen you to be united to Him by charity.

Acts of Love.

Petitions for Grace to carry out the object God had in choosing you, and for His love.

" Thy hands have made me and formed me. Give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments " (Ps. cxviii, 73).

I am Thine. Thy Hands have made my soul out of nothing, and have fashioned my body. I am Thy servant. To Thee and not to myself do I belong. Give me, O Lord, understanding, for Thou art my light. Enlighten my dark mind that I may learn Thy commandments, that I may learn Thy Will. Give me light to see Thy Will, and grace to do it till the end. Here I am, O Lord, do with me what Thou wilt, only give me Thy love. I thank Thee O Father of my Lord Jesus Christ for chosing me before the foundation of the world, that I might be holy and unspotted in Thy sight in charity.

RELIGIOUS VOCATION

"I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called" (Eph. iv, 1).

1. These pathetic words of the Apostle ought to move us profoundly. Why are they pathetic? Because he appeals to us as "a prisoner in the Lord." For the love of Christ he was confined in the Mamertine prison in Rome, and, setting us an example by joyfully suffering the loss of liberty, of goods, of friends, of honours, pleasures and riches for the love of Jesus Christ, he exhorts us "to walk," that is, to live, in a way worthy of that high calling we have received from God.

2. What is that calling?

"What hast thou come hither for?
Why hast thou left the world?
Was it not that thou mightest live to God
And become a spiritual man?"

(*Imit. of Christ*, i, 25.)

(*a*) I left the world, my father's house, the home I might have made for myself with all its comforts; my own possessions, great or small; my liberty; in order that, freed from these things, I might "live to God."

To live to God means that God should be my centre, my one object. He is to be my riches, my wealth, that is why I am poor. He is to be my Father, my Spouse, my one Friend, that is why I have left my home, my family life, my friends. I am to put my feet into His fetters, my neck into His

chains. I am to bow down my shoulder and bear His yoke. I must not be grieved with His bands. Therefore I have given up my liberty and sacrificed my freedom by obedience; that I might "live to God," that I might be "a prisoner in the Lord," with His yoke on me made sweet with love, with His burden on my shoulders, that burden made light because borne for Him.

To live to God is to think of him instead of myself, and thus to love Him with my whole mind. "Let thy thoughts be on the precepts of God, and meditate continually on His commandments; and He will give thee a heart," (that is, He will soften your heart and fill it with love), "and the desire of wisdom will be given thee" (Ecclus vi, 37). To live to God is to look at Him and His beauty instead of at myself and my own deformity; and the more I look at Him the more I shall love Him and desire to be like to Him. "Think of me, and I will think of thee."

To live to God is to delight in Him, to dedicate my whole being to Him, to love Him with all the affections of my heart, instead of loving external things; people, comforts, books, possessions. Above all, and this is the hardest, instead of loving myself, I must love Him with my whole heart.

To live to God is to love His Will, because it is His Will, that is, to love Him for His own sake, not for my sake. If I love His Will, I love Him, for He and His Will are one. Thus I shall love Him with my whole soul.

To live to God is to serve Him, and strive to do His Will, always, in every detail, everywhere, and thus to love Him with all my strength.

How easy it is to be in a religious order and yet not to live to God, but to self. To think of self, to look at self and its interests, to delight in self, to love self-will in the details of life, to employ my time, my energy, my whole strength in pleasing myself. Thus I should walk unworthy of the vocation in which I am called.

O my God, give me grace to love Thee and to live to Thee and not to myself. Hitherto how often have I thought of myself, looked at myself, turned my eyes from Thee. All my ills have come, O Lord, from not keeping my eyes fixed on Thee. I repent, O Jesus, give me grace to think of Thee, to love Thee, to do Thy Will with all my strength. Mary, my Mother, obtain this grace for me, now in my retreat.

(*a*) My object in coming to the convent and putting on the habit of religion was to " become a spiritual man." What is meant by this? A worldly man is one who lives according to the ideas, principles and maxims of the world. A sensual man is one who lives to gratify his senses, his eyes, his taste, his various appetites and desires. A spiritual man is one who loves God more than the world and his own soul more than his body, eternal life more than the present life on earth. A spiritual man must govern himself by spiritual ideas, principles and maxims, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit and not of the flesh. His light must be faith; the law—that is, the Will of God—must be his guide and the lamp for his feet; his staff must be prayer, and the nourishment of his soul, his daily bread must be union with God. Like the Angel, though he seems to eat and drink with other men, and does so for his

bodily life, he must yet " use an invisible food, which cannot be seen by men." For honour, he must take humility; for riches, poverty; for license, obedience. His only love, that is the only thing loved for its own sake, must be the holy and adorable Will of God.

How far, O my God, how very far am I from being a really spiritual man, and yet why have I left the world? To live as the world? No; to become a spiritual man. O my Jesus, give me grace to walk worthy of the vocation in which I am called.

3. In this retreat, then, I must try fervently to amend my whole life. I have not to change my state of life, for I am a religious, consecrated to God, but fervently, that is, vigorously, courageously to amend my whole life, by being determined henceforth to have only one end in view in all I do, namely, to live to God and to become a spiritual man; to walk by the Spirit and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v, 22).

To do this I must " be watchful and diligent in the service of God."

I am God's servant. By the right of creation I am His and I was made to know Him and His Will, to love Him and His Will, to serve Him by doing His Will. " I am thine, save Thou me, for I have sought Thy Will." " Deal with Thy servant according to Thy mercy, and teach me Thy Will. I am Thy servant, give me understanding, that I may know Thy Will." I am Thy servant because Thou hast chosen me. I am Thy servant because I have chosen Thee, and by my own will have given myself to Thee. *Juravi et statui custodire judicia justitiæ Tuæ*—" I have sworn and

am fully determined to keep the judgements of Thy justice "; to fulfil all required by Thy Will.

To do this I must be " watchful and diligent."

Watchful for the least word of command, the slightest indication of Thy Will. As a good servant watches for a signal from the master, so will I watch for a signal of Thy Will. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

Diligent in all things, casting away all sloth, idleness and tepidity. " In carefulness not slothful, in spirit fervent, serving the Lord." (Rom. xii, 11). " Thou hast commanded that Thy commandments should be kept with exceeding great care." (Ps. cxviii, 4). " Give me understanding and I will search Thy law, and I will keep it with my whole heart " (ib. 34).

Grant me, O Lord, to persevere in Thy service, to remember that I came to religion not to languish in sloth, but to live to Thee, and to become a spiritual man. Give me grace to be ever watchful and diligent in Thy service. Amen.

THE CALL OF JESUS

"Good Master, what shall I do?

OUR end, as Religious, is exactly the same as that for which God made all men: to save our one immortal soul. But to that end He has added a higher one, to which He calls those happy souls who have given themselves to Him in the religious life.

We come to our Lord, then, with the young man in the Gospel, and, kneeling in His presence, we ask Him, "Good Master, what shall *I* do that I may receive life everlasting?" (Matt. xix, 16). Consider:

1. *The Demand.*

(*a*) How did the young man act? With fervour, with respect, with confidence.

(*b*) What was the object of his request? Eternal life. Nothing could be higher or grander.

(*c*) What was our Lord's reply? First, an indirect one, by way of a question, to perfect his faith and to instruct him in the truth; and, secondly, a direct one, to show him the one way to heaven.

"Why askest thou Me concerning good? One is good, God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix, 17).

2. *The Young Man's Response.*

"Master, all these things have I kept from my youth; what is yet wanting to me?" (Matt. xix, 20).

Our Lord saw his innocence and uprightness,

his apparent earnestness, and St Mark tells us that " Jesus, looking upon him, loved him." What is yet wanting?

3. *The Call of Jesus.*

" If thou wouldst be perfect."

This is surely the very thing that we religious desire. Who would not be perfect? Who would not seek perfection? It is, at least, the very thing we *ought* to desire with all our hearts. Do you wish to be perfect? Do you desire it with your whole heart? Can you say with truth, " As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God "? (Ps. xli, 2).

" Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." Make no reserve; sacrifice *all*, and then:

" Come, follow Me."

Jesus calls us to the perfection of humility, patience, obedience, poverty, chastity, charity.

4. *Rejection of the Call.*

" Who, being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions " (Mark, x, 22).

How senseless! How wrong! How foolish! He asked what was wanting, and when he heard it he went away *sorrowful*. He had a reserve with God. He could go so far, but no further: as if he had said, " Do not ask me that, O Lord; anything save that."

" He went away sad." Went away from Jesus! Shall we also go away? No, Lord; rather we will say with St Peter, " Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life " (John, vi, 69).

Give what Thou wilt: without Thee we are poor;
And rich with Thee, take what Thou wilt away.

PERFECTION

I

WHAT IS PERFECTION?

"After Abraham began to be ninety and nine years old, the Lord appeared to him: and said unto him: I am the Almighty God: walk before me and be perfect" (Gen. xvii, 1).

WHAT a beauty there is in this primitive scene, related with such simplicity in the inspired word of God.

The ancient saint. A man who had served God for ninety-nine years, who had at the word of God gone out of his country, left his kindred and his father's house and gone in faith into the land of Chanaan. Now at length God appears to him in some mystical way and gives him this short but comprehensive rule of life. "I am the Almighty God; walk before ME, and be perfect."

"Be perfect." Can man be perfect? The fulness of good—that has no defect, but is in every way complete, so that it can never be increased—this absolute perfection is found only in God Himself. But what is perfection as far as it is possible for man? Perfection is to put God first in everything; never, even in good things, to seek my own pleasure and will before God's pleasure and God's will. To be perfect is to establish the right order in everything, by looking at God and not at self, and seeking to please Him rather than self. Mortal sin puts self absolutely first, turning utterly from God. Venial sin also puts

self first, turning the will partly from God. Imperfection prevents God from being the true beginning and end of every action.

Our Lady was the only mere creature who was quite perfect, seeking God, and God only, and God for His own sake absolutely and entirely, in every action of her life, and using in every action all the grace of God. This is impossible without a special privilege of grace, but to aim at it is the obligation of us religious.

This perfection we see in the most absolute sense in God, who always must seek His own glory in everything. God made man in His human nature, must be absolutely perfect by doing all for God and His glory. " I do always the things that please Him." " This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

St Alphonsus used to warn religious that vocation and perseverance are two distinct graces. God gives us vocation in spite of many sins, defects and infidelities; but we cannot expect the grace of perseverance unless we dispose ourselves for it by prayer and good works. It is the crowning grace of which the devil desires to deprive us, and God allows Him to tempt us, to try our fidelity and constancy, in order to increase our reward.

II

THE DESIRE OF PERFECTION

THE desire of perfection, or the determination to aim steadily at perfection, is the first step.

What is a true desire of perfection?

It is a firm determination to live not only a *good* but a *holy* life, in the practice of all the virtues.

Most men are not thoroughly determined to live holy lives. In a weak manner they employ half their strength, half their energy, on a work that requires all their power. Christians living a careless, worldly life are of this number. They do certain good works, say certain prayers, hear Mass, give some alms, but spend most of their time in things merely worldly and according to their inclination. Their life is a strange mixture of good and bad, their hearts are divided between God and the world.

Now there are three degrees of determination in the service of God.

The first is to give up the indifferent life of worldly Christians, and to side definitely with the good and earnest, and to enter on a devout life with prayer, frequent Sacraments, etc. This is a good state, and religious are certainly in this class, for they must by their state of life make open profession of leading a devout life. But this is accompanied by many great imperfections, often with much tepidity, owing to the causes of lukewarmness being allowed to remain.

So many devout Christians and religious have little or no determination to a really *fervent* life. They would rather die than give up a good life, but in spite of that they are tepid in spiritual duties; they think much of what others may say or judge of them; they have multitudes of little attachments and plans for their own comfort. They need another and a more earnest resolution.

The second degree is to take up vigorously certain special practices, on which depend true advancement in virtue, and which cannot be continued without great fruit, e.g.,

(*a*) Continual care to live in God's presence.

(*b*) Recollection amid the distractions and changes of life.

(*c*) A resolve to examine and mortify the irregular movements of the heart.

(*d*) Constant care to keep the heart free and detached from all earthly things.

These distinct resolutions, when they are sincere and generous, unite us to God much more nearly and strongly than the general good resolution of the first degree. It is necessary to enter this second class if we desire to aspire to perfection and to be wholly for God. *But among devout persons very few are really in this class.*

The third degree is still more elevated. It adds stability and constancy to the second; for some have the particular points above mentioned in view, but they make only a weak effort to secure them. They have not a true idea of recollection, or of detachment from all things, being content with a slight measure. But those in the third class are absolutely determined to do what is the will of God. Some good persons are content to do things good and praiseworthy. But those with the highest determination seek not only to do good things, but to choose that which is God's will, so that they carefully consider what that will is, and then resolutely perform it. Not content with keeping from evil, nor with simply doing good, they try to seek that particular good which will make *them* perfect. " All that is good is not therefore holy; nor is all that is perfect necessarily pleasing to God," says the *Imitation*. That pleases God which makes *us* perfect, and which God wills of *us*. Holiness consists in doing what God demands and

expects of us, and in doing it with a view to please God. There may be many other things in themselves better and more perfect, but not for us.

Persons who are good often choose only those employments which suit their humour and taste and which give them natural satisfaction. For instance, a certain branch of study is to their taste. They devote their best hours to it. If they renounced this taste in order to do what God really demands of them they would suffer at first, but so would find a hidden manna, the sweet taste of God's good pleasure. Perhaps he who is thus occupied according to his natural taste would, if he sought God's will only, devote himself to visiting the sick, the dying, to instructing, etc., or would offer himself, if under obedience, as willing to do these things. Men are so closely attached to what they do according to their choice and their own will that they are unwilling to do other things; their time is precious when occupied according to their own will; but a spiritual man delivers himself up to serve all, as the slave of Him who died for all: *ut qui vivunt, jam non sibi vivant, sed ei qui pro ipsio mortuus est et resurrexit.*

III

ON SEEKING PERFECTION

"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x, 13).

God is faithful to all, and gives to all grace sufficient to overcome every temptation; but particular and efficacious grace, to which He is not bound, He only gives to those who act generously towards Him. To be generous and liberal towards God is to do more than we are obliged. " The stricter union we form with God and the more liberal we show ourselves to His Majesty, the more bountiful shall we find Him with us, the more graces shall we daily receive " (St Ignatius).

It is important to aim at one particular thing in the spiritual life and not at perfection in general.

The chief obstacle to our perfection is the fact of our not doing what God has already inspired us to do. Why ask light to see God's will, when you have not done what you know *is* His will?

Commit no deliberate venial sin; those which are indeliberate and which arise from weakness, ignorance or inadvertence, though mixed with some negligence, should cause rather humiliation than affliction.

Never stop on the road to perfection. " The soul of those that labour shall grow fat " (Prov. xiii, 4).

Four means of advancement:

1. Imitate the most perfect of your brethren, and that which is the best in each.

2. We are obliged to set a good example. A perfect religious does more good in a Community by example than the most eloquent sermons. A bad religious is the author of incalculable evil.

3. We are obliged to edify the world. Take care lest the Order, your Mother, might suffer in reputation through your bad, tepid, irreligious conduct. The whole is often judged of according to the part.

4. Always renew your first fervour and act as if to-day you had entered Religion. Imagine each day to be the day you have begun religious life, and so live that the fervour you had at first may daily increase. St Antony, at death, said to his disciples, " To renew fervour we should often ask ourselves, Why have I entered Religion? Was it to have good food, every kind of comfort? Was it to have entire liberty to do my own will? Was it to gain praise, honour, ' the bubble, reputation ' ? Was it not rather to apply myself wholly to God? All desire of praise, honour, vanity, is the world I have renounced." What happiness it would be if I could really grieve for all the time I have lost and the grace I have wasted !

" Be you therefore perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect " (Matt. v, 48). It is truly to the glory of God to have His children to be so like Him that, by them, He may come to be honoured, known and glorified. Remember:

1. That the reason why the Holy Scripture so constantly reminds us of our dignity as the Sons of God, is to make us more careful to do nothing unworthy of our noble state. We are the more noble part of the mystical body. Dust on the feet is little, one grain of dust in the eye is painful.

2. Never think you have advanced far, but remember there is a long way still to go. A sure sign of little progress is to think we have gone a long way. Socrates said, " All I know is that I know nothing."

Our perfection consists in performing our ordinary daily actions well. " Not living in Jerusalem, but living there well, is a subject of congratulation." In our daily duties of prayer, and examination of conscience, hearing or saying Mass, Office, and vocal prayers, with attention, works of obedience, penance, one gains thirty, another sixty, another a hundred. The outward action is the same—the difference lies in the way it is performed. Our perfection consists (*a*) in doing what God wills; (*b*) in the way He wills; (*c*) because He wills it. One of the most important principles to remember, meditate on, and impress on others, is, that our salvation, advancement and perfection is in our ordinary everyday actions done really well (Cf. Deut. xxx, 11–14, and Luke, xvii, 21).

What makes actions good?

Do them as purely for God as you can.

Do your utmost to perform them well and, for this, do them in the presence of God. We must use the presence of God as a means of doing our ordinary actions well. If the attention we paid to the presence of God made us do our duties negligently this would be an illusion and not the true practice of God's presence. One of the best and most practical ways of living in God's presence is to take care to do each action in such a way that it can be offered to Him, " walking before God," which is the same as " pleasing God " (Gen. v, 24; Ecclus. xliv, 16; Heb. xi, 5).

This is praying always; perform well all you do, and you will praise Him always.

To do all things well, look on each thing as the only thing we have to do. This one action is the will of God for me, *now*, and therefore all I have to do.

Perform each action as you would wish to have done it if, after it, you were to die. " If you had a good conscience you would not fear death, because sin, not death, is to be dreaded."

To do our actions well we should not look forward too much, but think of the present day only.

We are fond of excusing our dissipation and negligence on account of our work and exterior duties. The fault is not in our work but in ourselves, who have not learnt how to work in a recollected spirit.

If you do not penetrate to the inward soul of the work, but stop at the outside, you will weary yourself with many things to little purpose. The will of God is the inward soul of every action, and this ought to be our food and nourishment. Martha and Mary are loving sisters and ought to help one another. *Prayer, well made, helps us to do every action well, and every action, well done, helps us to pray well.* If you feel trouble and disquiet about your duties, it shows that the help and steadying influence and refreshment of prayer are needed.

SIN IN RELIGIOUS

"Non permittas me separari a te"

"BEHOLD the hand of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He should not hear" (Isa lix, 1, 2).

1. The object we had in view when we came into religion was "to live to God, and become spiritual men." In other words to be united to God. If this union with God, which is a union chiefly in will, is the one object of our embracing the religious life, the sole thing which gives meaning to such a life, it is only reasonable that we should vigorously remove all that would impede this happy and holy union.

Why am I not by this time more closely united to God? Perhaps I have been in the enclosed garden of religion for many years. Have I progressed as I ought? Am I more united to God, more entirely devoted to Him than I was at the beginning? If my progress towards union is not what it ought to have been, what is the reason? Is the defect on God's side or mine?

Not on God's side, for: "Behold the hand of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save: nor is His ear heavy that it cannot hear."

What, then, is the impediment to union?

"Your iniquities have made a division between you and your God, and your sins have

hidden His face from you, that He should not hear."

SIN is the one impediment to union with God, the only thing that can make a division, a great gulf between the soul and its God.

What is love of God? To love someone is to wish well to that person. But how can we wish well to God, who is infinite Good in Himself, and to whom no good can be added? The only good we can wish to God is that His Will may be done in ourselves and in all others, because it is His Will, and in the way He wills. This is love of God and union with Him.

Sin, on the other hand, is the deliberate choice of what we know to be displeasing to Him. To see that a thing is opposed to God's Will, and therefore evil, and yet, because it pleases us, to will it, desire it, choose it, embrace it: to choose evil instead of good, our own will instead of God's Will, self instead of God, Barabbas in preference to Jesus Christ—this is to sin.

To do this, in however small a thing, at once makes a division between God and the soul, and hides His face from us, that He should not hear. He hears, because He knows everything, but He turns from the soul (or rather the soul turns from Him), as if He did not hear.

How foolish, and how sad, to make a division, a gulf between God and our soul, when the one object we have in view, the one explanation of our mode of life in religion is to be united to God. If one sin forms this division, what must be done by a habit of sin persevered in and loved! How wide the division, how deep the gulf must become!

There are many reasons why we should hate

sin. It offends God, crucifies our Lord Jesus Christ, obliges God to punish us in this world and in the next; but the reason that, as religious, we should most deeply reflect upon, is this: Sin is the one impediment to union with God, which is the one and only object I have in being a religious.

O my God, I adore Thee: Thou art my Creator, I am thy creature, made by Thy hand. I desire to be closely united to Thee. Thou art the highest Good, the unchangeable Good. Thou only canst satisfy the desires of my soul. Would that I were one with Thee: one in mind, in desire, in will: one by loving what Thou lovest, hating what Thou hatest: seeking what Thou lovest, flying from what Thou dost hate. Alas, O my God! how often, to please myself, have I chosen evil instead of good, my will instead of Thine, myself instead of Thee. Pardon me, O my God; I now hate all sin because it makes a division between Thee and me. Let me not be separated from Thee. Let me *never* be separated from Thee. Grant that I may love Thee; delight in Thee; be devoted to Thee. Grant that I may always hate what displeases Thee. I thank Thee for showing me the truth. I love Thee, my God, but I do not love Thee as I ought; make me love Thee more and more. Pardon me all my past sins. Make me hate sin. Wash my soul in Thy Blood. Say to me: " thy sins are forgiven." Here I am, O Lord, do with me whatever Thou wilt, only give me Thy holy love. Grant me to die without one sin unforgiven. Cast me not away from Thy face; take not Thy holy Spirit from me.

2. Besides making a division between us and God, sin hides His face, so that He should not hear

our prayers. This accounts for the fact that we have often prayed to be holy, and yet remain stuck in the same mire. Our sins, like a thick cloud over the sun, hide His face from us. Our sins of pride and self-love prevent our prayers from going up to His throne. " The prayer of him who humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds " (Ecclus. xxxv, 21). The clouds hiding from us the face of God, which alone can enlighten us and make us happy, are formed by our constant venial sins. We must turn away from those sins, hate them and repent of them and say: " Make Thy face to shine on Thy servant, save me for Thy mercy's sake " (Ps. xxx, 17).

O Lord what will become of me if Thou hidest Thy face from me. " Thou didst hide Thy face from me, and I was troubled " (Ps. xxix, 7). Nothing but trouble and misery can come to me and be my lot in this world and the next, if Thy face is hidden from me. My sins alone can hide it; give me grace then to hate and turn from all sin, that the light of Thy countenance may shine on Thy servant. With Thee what need I fear? " The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? " (Ps. xxvi, 1).

If Thy face is hidden from me, I walk at once in darkness and in the shadow of death. Give me grace, then, to hate wilful sin that hideth the light of Thy countenance. " Thou hast made known to me the ways of life." Give me grace to walk along them, instead of straying like a sheep that is lost; " Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance," which alone can give me true joy. " I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall

appear" (Ps. xvi, 15). "At Thy right hand are delights for evermore" (Ps. xv, 11).

Grant then, O Lord, that my sins, my daily sins, my habits of sin may no longer hide Thy face from me. Bow down Thine ear and hear me, for now I detest every wilful sin. Never again will I choose evil instead of good, myself instead of Thee, Barabbas instead of Jesus Christ my loving Saviour.

"May the Lord bless me and keep me;
May the Lord show His face to me, and have mercy on me;
May the Lord turn His countenance to me and give me peace" (Num. vi, 24).

DEATH

"For I am even now ready to be sacrificed: and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge will render to me in that day: and not only to me, but to them also that love His coming" (2 Tim. iv, 6, 7, 8).

No thought is so comforting, so inspiring, so joyful for a good religious as the certainty of death. In times of darkness she knows that light will then come; in times of temptation that peace will then be assured; in times of weary labour that rest will be eternal.

For tepid and careless religious, who are not, like Martha, careful about much serving, this thought is stirring, and shows them how necessary is fervour. For bad religious, conscious of mortal sin, it is alarming beyond all expression, and it preaches to them repentance.

The words I have quoted from St Paul are the thoughts of the great Apostle, meditating on the near approach of death.

1. "*I am even now ready to be sacrificed.*

Death is a sacrifice, We are the victims. Our bodies will die as the victim of sacrifice dies.

A sacrifice is offered to give supreme honour and glory to God, to thank Him, to show love to Him, to atone for sin, and to ask for all we need in soul and body. This, then, is the disposition in which we must meet death, and in this frame

of mind should we always think of it. These were the ends of our Lord's sacrifice on Mount Calvary, and in this spirit should we unite our sacrifice to His.

Christ's death was voluntary: " He was offered because it was His own will "; and we must say: " Freely will I sacrifice to Thee, and will give praise unto Thy Name, O God: because it is good " (Ps. liii, 8).

Death is the last and best act of self-sacrifice. As Christians and religious our life should be a succession of acts of self-sacrifice, and death is the final one. With it the series is over. A religious is accustomed to sacrifice self at all times of the day; the habit of obeying every call of duty, the first sound of the bell, etc., is but the preparation for the supreme act of sacrifice—Death.

2. *I am even now ready.*

Am I ready? The only true wisdom is to be and to live ready for death, whenever and however it may come. As St Angela of Merici advised one who asked her for a simple rule of holiness, " Never do anything you would have wished not to have done if you died to-night."

3. *The time of my death is at hand.*

Each one of us, even the youngest, can say this. Life is so short, that for all the time of death is near, and may be very near. " Behold I come quickly."

" Very quickly must thou go hence . . . A man is here to-day and to-morrow he is gone. In the morning think thou shalt not live till night; and when evening comes promise not to Thyself the next morning " (*Imitation* Bk 1, 23).

Three things should be borne in mind, as preparation for a holy death.

(*a*) " I have fought the good fight." Every temptation resisted is part of the good fight. Whenever we sin we fail in the fight, and for this we must ask pardon, and so fight now that we may be able to say at death: " I have fought the good fight." Are you fighting? If so, you are preparing for a holy death. If you are *not* fighting with self, that is indeed a bad sign.

(*b*) " I have finished my course." I have persevered. We can all say that of our lives up to this time. By God's grace I have up to now, persevered. This gives hope for the future. What a blessing it is that we cannot *merit* final perseverence, for if it depended upon us, how probable it is that we should lose it. But as it depends from first to last on God, who is infinitely good, we can most confidently hope for it, if only we pray and love Him.

(*c*) " I have kept the faith." In thanking God that He had kept the faith, St Paul shows that there is difficulty in doing so. Faith is a gift, and we may lose it. How good of God to have bestowed it on us, to have preserved us from losing it so far! And how careful should we all be to foster it and act on it, that we may keep it to the end, and be able to say at death: " I have kept faith with God; kept my contract of love to Him; faithfully kept my vows."

4. "*Now there is laid up for me a crown of justice.*

If I have been living in a state of grace and working for God, every deliberate action has gained merit for heaven. A crown is already laid up for me, treasure in heaven, where the moth doth not corrupt and where thieves cannot break through, nor steal.

On the other hand we must think of that debt which our past sins, our infidelity to grace, our negligences, etc, have contracted to the justice of God, and we must try and pay it all before death comes, by receiving every pain and suffering from God.

What joy to receive that crown! to know that it is waiting for us in heaven! Discouragement whispers: "It is all very well for St Paul, but not for one like me." But St Paul particularly says: "Not only to me, but to them also who love His coming"—to those who *love* Him. If you love Him the crown is yours. Not St Paul's crown, but *yours*, your own, proportioned to your love.

Love "His coming" in Holy Communion, in the Mass: love His coming hidden under the Cross, and in the persons of the poor. Love the thought of His coming at death. Above all, love His holy Will.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

HELL

RELIGIOUS who lead bad lives receive a worse damnation than others.

Behold with the eye of faith many priests and religious in hell.

Ask for extreme fidelity to God.

1. The happiness of the saints is stable, and they have an absolute assurance that they can never lose it. Hence it follows that they regard hell

(*a*) With a holy awe, full of reverence for the supreme Justice of God, in His punishment of sin.

(*b*) With wonderful calmness and tranquillity, knowing that they can never fall into the abyss.

(*c*) With intense thankfulness to God, to whose mercy and goodness they owe their safety, and

(*d*) With tender compassion for us, who are in such danger of going there.

2. A fervent religious participates in this happy serenity of the saints. For, in proportion as you are faithful to your vocation, is your hope of salvation well grounded. By God's grace you are in a place of safety, which may in itself be considered as a mark of your predestination. You have all the means necessary for becoming a great saint. Since you have really given yourself with earnestness to Jesus Christ, you may rest assured that He will do great things for you. You are under His wing, and all He asks is that you should be faithful: faithful to Him who has chosen

you; faithful to His grace, so that you may not sin wilfully; faithful to the movements of grace working within your soul, that you may rise every day to better things.

3. No one can say that tepid and relaxed religious will be saved. It is quite certain that they are in grave danger of everlasting damnation; that their salvation is more difficult than that of those who have not been called to the religious life; and that their everlasting punishment will be more severe. To such are applicable those solemn words of Jesus Christ: "And that servant who knew the will of his Lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have given much, of him will they demand the more" (Luke xii, 47, 48).

RESOLUTION. 1. Serve God more from love than from fear.

2. At the same time fear hell, for it would deprive you of God and his love for ever.

3. Remember that in heaven there is a place for you. But there is also one in hell, that may be yours. Often contemplate both, that you may gain the one and escape the other.

LITTLE THINGS

"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater: and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater" (Luke xvi, 10).

How practical is this teaching of our Lord, how familiar we are with it, and yet how easily we act against it. It is so easy to despise a thing because it is small. Nature shrinks from things that cost much, and despises things that cost little, and so does nothing for God. Grace is courageous in important things that are difficult, and never looks on anything that is God's Will as trivial, however small it may appear, because God's Will makes all things great.

"Nature hath regard to temporal things, rejoiceth at earthly gain, is troubled at losses and irritated at every injurious word, however slight." Thus nature, looking at things according to the world, estimates them as great or small, according to the measure of the world and earthly loss or gain. "But grace attendeth to things eternal, and cleaveth not to temporal things; is not disturbed by the loss of things, nor exasperated with hard words, for it placeth its treasure and its joy in heaven, where nothing perisheth" (*Imitation*, Bk III, 54.)

The fact is, then, that nothing is trivial or unimportant. What we call little things, are only little in the sense of easy, common, within the reach of all, but not in the sense of unimportant

or trivial. This is the case even in worldly business. A great Railway Company will be as particular about 2½d. as about £2 10s. 0d. If you arrive without a ticket they will be as resolved that you shall pay the 2½d. it cost, as they would be had it cost £2 10s. 0d. Not that the 2½d. is much to them, but on principle. "He that is faithful in that which is little, is faithful also in that which is greater."

To be careless and heedless in little things, shows a careless and heedless habit of mind that will affect more important things; and to be careful in the least shows that a man can be trusted in greater. Hence the common proverb: "Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves."

Carefulness instead of sloth about little things is most necessary for perseverance, because we all so entirely depend on the special grace of God in order to live to Him. If we refuse to do a number of easy things well within our power, with all the graces He has bestowed on us, how can we ask, or expect, to have other particular helps that are necessary to keep us from sin and make advance? Yet without these graces what progress can we make? How can we even stand?

It is indeed an undoubted principle that God always gives enough grace to resist temptation, as St Paul teaches in 1 Cor. x, 13, where he draws this doctrine from the character of God and His perfection. "God is faithful, and He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will make also with temptation issue (passage out) that you may be able to bear it." He gives by grace, issue, that is, a way to escape sin.

All have grace enough, but one man has over and above, special, particular graces, by help of which he resists sin and advances in virtue. These special favours are the pure gifts of God's liberal bounty. He in no way owes them. We cannot claim them by any kind of right. They are the fruit of humble prayer, and often given in time of need as the gracious answer to prayers that we in our ignorance and self-love thought were unanswered, because we did not get some foolish or hurtful thing we blindly asked for, and murmured at not receiving.

As we have no right to these special graces, is there any way in which we can act which will give us a well-founded hope that God will go on giving them, so that they may not fail us in the time of our need?

Yes, there is a way. It is to be faithful in those things which we call little, but which we ought to call important, most valuable, although easy and well within our power. We have the assurance of our Lord Himself that " he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater."

PURGATORY

"If any man's work burn, he shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii, 15).

NOTHING can better correct the ideas that our corrupt nature would suggest on the subject of what we call "little things" than diligent and humble contemplation of Purgatory.

Make an act of faith in the supernatural pains of Purgatory.

Behold multitudes of religious there, men and women, of every Order; some we have known, some with whom we have lived; perhaps some who died here. If those whose bodies repose hard by were sent to-night amongst us, what an experience they could unfold! And yet what could they tell us except what the Church, the holy Fathers and the saints all tell us with one unanimous voice? If we will not believe them neither should we believe if one rose from the dead.

Tell us, O holy souls, do you suffer much?

Listen to their answer. "Oh, woe is me, woe is me! Alas! Alas! Have pity on me, at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me. Why is my exile prolonged? How can I sing the song of the Lord in a strange and far distant land? As the hart pants after the fountains of water, so does my soul thirst after Thee, Oh, God! I am separated from God my only good, my only happiness, my only desire; I pine after God, I long for God, I am consumed with my desire to see God, I hunger after God, I thirst for God, yet

I cannot possess Him. As the parched sands of the desert, so is my soul without God. I am fainting in my nothingness, and He alone can fill me. I am in darkness, and he alone can enlighten me. If I had all creatures, I should have nothing, for I have not God!"

Alas! alas, what a lamentable voice, what anguish is expressed in those tones!

But tell me, holy souls, why cannot you see God? Why not be united to Him? Why are you thus cast out from his presence? Were you not religious? Did you not give up all for God?

"Religious we were, and we are saved. But now we are shut out from God, because we were so foolish as to do that imperfectly which required our whole souls. We had not a strong desire of perfection. We aimed at it, or we should not be here, but in hell. But we did not hunger and thirst after that perfection to which we were called. We had not an earnest will continually to die to ourselves; in many things we did not seek God; in many we sought ourselves: and now we cannot find God; we sought Him not with all our strength, and so now for long we seek him in vain.

"But besides the loss of God (our greatest pain), a vast multitude of other pains afflict us. Every defect has its own punishment; our want of the spirit of real poverty is punished by a terrible kind of poverty here—the sight of our nothingness, and the misery of having suffered so little from love of religious poverty.

"Every sensible pleasure is here avenged by terrible agonies of mysterious fire. We cannot describe that fire, but its pain is so penetrating that nothing on earth is an image of it. Every

idle word by which we broke silence and dissipated our own hearts is here punished with a separate and most severe penance. All our breaches of rule, our neglect of prayer, our want of mortification and of the spirit of penance, are now punished by the just appointment of our all-just and holy Judge."

Listening in spirit to such words as these, ask yourself: "Do I seek God with all my heart? Do I practise continual mortification? Do I strive earnestly after perfection?" If not, fear lest you also come to dwell for a long period in this place of torment. Take warning from those suffering souls, and in the meantime hearken to their cry for help: "Have pity on us, for the hand of the Lord hath touched us."

Unveil, O Lord, and on us shine
In glory and in grace;
This gaudy world grows pale before
The beauty of Thy face.
Till Thou art seen, it seems to be
A sort of fairy ground,
Where suns unsetting light the sky,
And flowers and fruit abound.
But when Thy keener, purer beam
Is poured upon our sight,
It loses all its power to charm,
And what was day is night.

THE USE OF TIME

"While we have time, let us do good" (Gal. vi, 10).

1. Importance of good use of time.
2. In religious houses time is often wasted.
3. How we can, and ought, to repair the loss of time.

1. TIME is the price of Eternity. We have time in order to gain eternity. As time is given to us for this, and as God commands *all* to work out their salvation, He commands all to use time well.

God gives us time in order that we may have the opportunity of glorifying Him. It all belongs to Him, and if we misspend it, we are like a workman who idles, misusing what belongs to another.

Time once gone is an opportunity that never returns. We had it, but now we have it not. It flows always onwards. Each hour, each quarter, each minute could gain much for eternity. Alas! how many have I wasted?

2. We can lose time in religious houses. This is even a special snare for religious, because they are relieved from the necessity of working for their bread.

(*a*) Free time—idle talk—idle visits—idle gratifications.

(*b*) Some, from the activity of their nature, are always employed, but is their employment according to obedience? according to God's Will?

(*c*) If our time is employed in our observances and our work, is it well employed? For a religious no time is well employed which is not given to

God and spiritual profit. If we do things negligently with a tepid spirit, is it pleasing to God? Is it profitable to us?

Exterior diligence is exacted from servants, from railway officials, from soldiers. But God goes down to the heart and to the will.

PRINCIPLES:

(*a*) After the common duties, and the duties of my special office are fulfilled, any time remaining must be spent well, usefully, in a way pleasing to God.

(*b*) A *laborious* life may be *unfruitful*, if the work is done merely from self will, self love, and not from a desire to do what God requires.

(*c*) In order to use my time well, my actions must be done well. In keeping my Rule itself, if I do not enter into its spirit, I lose time.

3. Though in one sense irreparable, the loss of time can in another sense be repaired: "Redeem the time."

(*a*) By redoubled fervour. The thought of the time I have wasted should make me more fervent for the future.

(*b*) Do penance for the many bad days, bad hours, bad minutes. What are they but those in which we have suffered, but which we have let go by without merit, without using them for God. Do penance for the time of careless idle life (interiorly), of distracted soul, of hours without recollection and reflection, of idleness of mind and heart.

Let us walk while we have the light. "The night cometh when no man can work" (John ix, 4).

"Walk whilst you have the light" (John xii, 35).

In order to spend my time well as a religious,

I must remember that it all belongs not to me but to God and my Order. I must employ *all*, not in gratifying myself, but in doing God's Will, in the way He wills, and because He wills it. I must do what is pleasing to God, and I must do it in the way that pleases not myself, but Him, and I must do it because it pleases Him, not because it pleases me. A certain amount of time should be spent in recreation, and that in a way pleasing to God, and because He wills it. I must cut off idleness as the great and most dangerous snare—idle thoughts, idle words, idle actions, idle reading (so easy now-a-days) idle sights, idle occupations—What a subject here for self-examination; what a reason for penance is past idleness, interior and exterior.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

I

"THE FOUNTAINS OF THE SAVIOUR"

1. "And thou shalt say in that day: I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, for Thou wast angry with me: Thy wrath is turned away, and Thou hast comforted me.

2. Behold God is my Saviour. I will deal confidently, and will not fear: because the Lord is my strength and my praise, and He is become my salvation.

3. You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains:

4. And you shall say in that day: Praise ye the Lord, and call upon His name, make his works known among the people: remember that HisName is high.

5. Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath done great things: show this forth in all the earth.

6. Rejoice and praise, O thou habitation of Sion: for great is He that is in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. xii).

This whole chapter is a song of praise to God for His infinite mercy through Christ. It would be a good chapter for every religious to know by heart and you could not spend the free time of the retreat better than by learning its six verses. We Christians who live under the gentle rule of the Good Shepherd are the happy people spoken of by the evangelical Prophet and who ought always to be singing that joyful song:

" O Lord Thou wast angry with me: but
Thy wrath is turned away and Thou hast
comforted me."

Notice, in the third verse, a glad prophesy: " You shall draw waters with joy from the fountains of the Saviour."

The fountains of the Saviour are, above all, the sevenfold wells of grace, ever flowing and never failing, in the garden of His Church, the holy life-giving Sacraments.

After having once been washed in baptism, we ought not to need any other cleansing; but, alas! in this world how difficult it is to keep our garments white and unstained; and our merciful Lord, knowing this, has opened in His Church another fountain, the healing Sacrament of Penance. The primary intention of our Lord is to give us an ever-ready means of obtaining pardon for mortal sin, to be raised by Him from death to life. But this cannot be the object for which religious are commanded to go every week to confession. They are supposed to live habitually in God's grace. Why, then, do they go every week to confession? Why did some saints go every day? The words of the Holy Ghost are the explanation: " He that loveth cleanness of heart, for the grace of his lips, shall have the King for his friend," and the King Himself says, " He that is washed " (in baptism) " needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly." The feet of the soul are the affections, for the soul walks not by bodily footsteps but by acts of love. So to have cleanness or purity of heart we must wash the feet of our souls, defiled by the dust of many imperfections.

Now during the retreat I should ask myself

whether the holy Sacrament produces in me the effect of purity of heart. Purity of heart means freedom from all wilful sin. Of course, all sin, even the least, must be wilful, or it would not be sin. Pure means unmixed. Pure water is water unmixed with any other substance. A pure heart means one loving God only for His own sake. A heart the love of which is not yet pure is one loving something else—selfwill, for instance—not for God. A pure soul may have many involuntary imperfections, for how can they be avoided in this world? But as long as there is no wilful venial sin, the heart is pure.

II

CONFESSION

"He that loveth cleanness of heart, for the grace of his lips, shall have the King for his friend" (Prov. xxii, 11).

THIS is a high recommendation to seek for true purity or cleanness of heart. It ensures the King's friendship. It bestows on a soul the particular friendship of Jesus Christ, "the King of Ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever" (1 Tim. i, 17).

The holy Sacrament of Penance is one of those fountains of our Saviour, which He has opened in the Church and from which we are to drink waters with joy (Isa. xii, 3). Its object is to give us cleanness or purity of heart, that will make the King our friend, whose friendship indeed is the one object of spiritual life. Peace and joy are the results of using well the holy Sacrament of Penance.

The first object of this holy Sacrament is to for-

give mortal sin, to raise the dead to life. It is Jesus standing at the grave where His friend lies buried in the death of sin, weeping and calling upon him to come forth. It bestows the first degree of cleanness of heart, freedom from grave sin, and makes the King our friend.

But this is clearly not the reason why religious are bound to go to confession week by week. It is not supposed that they fall into mortal sin every week. But they may, perhaps, commit venial sin every week, though God forbid they should think they must do so. The second degree of cleanness of heart is the absence of venial or lesser sin. This the holy Sacrament promotes and makes the King more and more our friend. " I will not now call you servants but friends. Now you are clean by reason of the word I have spoken unto you."

If a soul has no sin of the present time it is still well to draw waters from this fountain of the Saviour, for it makes the soul more clean and attractive in the King's sight, and fills it more with peace and joy, but for this some past sin must be confessed.* Grace is increased, strength is supplied, light is poured in and the King becomes more intimate in friendship. We wash our feet and are " clean wholly " (St John, xiii, 10).

It is important to bear this in mind, so as to receive this Sacrament with the right intention,

*Theologians divide the matter of confession into two classes:

(*a*) Necessary matter, i.e. what must be confessed, viz. all mortal sins committed after baptism which have not yet been confessed, even if omitted in a previous confession through forgetfulness.

(*b*) Sufficient matter, i.e. without which no absolution can be given, viz. all venial sins and all mortal sins even already confessed and absolved.

not from mere routine, not for consolation, but to promote cleanness of heart that we may have the King for our friend.

If my frequent confessions have not produced cleanness of heart, that is freedom from wilful sin, the fault must be mine. The Precious Blood has not lost its power to cleanse. It must be my fault. This fault may be from failure in preparation, in the confession itself, or in thanksgiving.

As " without Me you can do nothing," it is useless to try to prepare well without asking for light to see our sins and grace to detest them for God's sake. This petition is the first part of the preparation. How do I attend to this ?

The next part of the preparation is to use the light God gives us, and by it to examine our conscience, to look into the glass, to see the stains on the face of our souls. It must be done by God's light, but we must use our own eyes. St Gregory's words in his commentary on the Book of Job should be remembered, that we shall see our sins better by looking at God than at ourselves, just as at sunset if we look at the sun we cannot help seeing the objects between us and the sun, the type of God. A religious soul going regularly to confession would see at once any mortal sin, had one been committed, without any lengthy examination. Death is unmistakable.

The object of the examination should be to discover if there has been a wilful venial sin, that is, if the soul since last confession has deliberately, seeing God's will, chosen its own. If this has been done, even once, there is matter for confession, and it is not necessary to go further. In fact, for many good souls it would be better to stop and

employ all the rest of the time in thinking, " Why should I repent of this sin? " in making acts of hatred of it and determination not to repeat it, with many petitions for help.

How much better is this than to confuse the mind and weaken contrition by a crowd of fears, troubles, doubts, imperfections, involuntary failings, temptations, none of which can be absolved nor be matters for contrition or purpose of amendment. For instance, to confess involuntary distractions in prayer is no use, unless direction is needed to know how to control them, and that is better given after absolution. If a deliberate distraction has been found and the time spent in contrition, then purity of conscience is really promoted and the King's friendship increased.

Remember that temptations, fears, troubles, can no more be absolved than headaches or indigestion, and if they alone are confessed and absolution given it is wholly invalid. Only sin repented of with a firm purpose of amendment can be absolved. If no sin has been committed, the benefits of the Sacrament can be secured, by humble confession, with repentance, of a past sin.

The second part of the preparation is by far the most important and often forgotten or made quite subordinate. It consists in thinking of the reasons why we should hate sin, and moving the will to turn from it. Having found in examination one wilful sin, the soul should reflect on the reasons of repentance. To repent of a sin, especially a venial sin, we must reflect upon the reasons why we should hate it. They are because it offends God, makes our Lord suffer, wounds His loving heart, is an odious return for His benefits,

darkens our minds, weakens our will and subjects us to punishment. Then should follow many hearty acts of hatred for that sin. Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. Have I done this in preparing? or have I instead drawn up a list of temptations, fears and feelings, and neglected acts of loving contrition for any one sin?

The third part of preparation is the most neglected of all, that is, sincere purpose of amendment. This can only be made for sin. Devout souls will always have an intention of not offending God wilfully, and if they have accused themselves of past sin, with the intention of not doing it again, the absolution will be valid. But this general intention is not fruitful. " I intend to be better " means nothing and is of no effect. And this is the main reason of the fruitlessness of confession. After a person has confessed fifty things, most of them no more matter for confession than a headache, I have often said: " What have you promised God not to do again? " " I did not promise anything," or, in other words, " I made no efficacious purpose of amendment at all "!

" You know the first stone to be laid is a good conscience; endeavour, therefore, with all your strength, to free yourself from even venial sins, and follow that which is most perfect " (St Teresa).

III

ON EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

General and Particular

Its importance.

The saints recommend it.

St Basil and St Augustine in their rules order it to be made every night. St Anthony, St Bernard, St Bonaventure, St John Chrysostom, command us to make it every night for two reasons:

1. To keep us from the same faults next day.

2. To be a wholesome check all day, knowing that at night we are to be examined.

St Ephrem and St John Climacus liken it to a merchant examining his books and making them up.

St Dorotheus teaches that this exercise, made well, prevents our faults from taking deep root.

The unexamined conscience is like the vineyard of the foolish man (Prov. xxiv, 30).

St Ignatius gathers up the tradition of the Church, and declares that examination, well made, is one of the best and most profitable means of progress. He ordered it to be made twice a day, at midday and at night. He desired also all persons living in the world to be taught it.

Therefore all ought greatly to esteem it as one of the most efficacious means of advancing. Nothing should make us neglect so holy a practice. Even sickness dispenses not from it. *We cannot neglect examination without at the same time neglecting the chief obligations of religious life.*

3. *The Particular Examination.*

The Particular Examination is so called because it is made on one particular subject.

The General Examination is on all faults.

St Ignatius, following St Bonaventure, reminds us that the devil tries to find out our weakest point, as a general does when attacking a city, in order to assail us there. We must do the same to strengthen it. Ask yourself then, " What bad habits have I ? "

Two reasons for fighting against bad habits (from Cassian):

1. Our greatest danger comes from them, for they are the occasions of our worst faults.

2. If they are conquered the rest will follow.

Each one has some predominant vice or passion, and our endeavour must be to destroy that. " Fight ye not with small, or great, but with the King of Israel only " (2 Paral. xviii, 30).

Consult with a confessor, after a clear manifestation of the state of your soul, as to the subject of particular examination.

It is a great and most important advantage to find the root and source of all our faults.

Two Counsels.

1. Take an exterior and visible fault first, even though there may be worse *interior* faults, for it is the first that scandalize.

2. Make haste to correct these exterior things, in order to set to work on interior faults, which are more important and harder to cure, and remember that the particular examination is intended to plant true interior virtue, as well as to correct faults—to plant after weeding.

N.B.—One of the best ways to correct exterior

faults is to take for practice the opposite perfection. If you are impatient at things that happen contrary to your desires or hopes, take for your examination the virtue of looking at all things as coming from the hand of God for your good. If you are in the habit of looking about you with curiosity, and wanting to see and hear everything, take for your examination the holy practice of always recollecting the presence of God, and the obligation of doing each thing as in His presence so that it may be good in His sight.

IV

SIGNS OF PROGRESS

We ought to know ourselves, but to think little about ourselves. How is this to be managed? By looking at God. We then see what stands between us and Him.

We want to know how we stand with God, but it is not well we should know for certain. So God hides it.

We have a certain conjectural knowledge from certain signs:

1. It is a good sign if we have a strong desire to serve God better. The stronger this is the better it is, but it must be practical.

2. Another good sign is to have fewer and less passionate desires than of old.

3. To start afresh constantly, every day. To-day shall be better than yesterday.

4. To have a definite thing in view. This is the idea of the particular examination.

5. It is a good sign if we feel that God is asking us for one thing, one particular attraction of grace.

DISCOURAGEMENT

DISCOURAGEMENT may be described as an inclination to give up all attempts at union with God and greater holiness on account of difficulties and past failures. We lose heart, partly in ill-temper, partly in real doubt of perseverance; we (*a*) grow querulous and peevish with God, and (*b*) relax in effort to deny ourselves and please Him. It is not in itself an act of sin, but a state which causes a multitude of sins.

It comes from looking at self and not at God. Its motto is:

" My eyes are ever on myself;
For my feet are fast in the snare";

instead of:

" My eyes are ever on the Lord:
For He will pluck my feet out of the snare "
(Ps. xxiv, 15).

If the cause of discouragement is looking at self, the remedy will be looking at God our Lord, and being confident that He can and will pluck my feet from the snare. If his foot is caught in a snare a man cannot move. He cannot walk along the way. A spiritual snare prevents the soul from walking along the way of God. Whatever keeps us back is a snare. God can free us, though He demands our desire to be released and co-operation with His grace.

As long as we merely fix our eyes on the snare

there is no hope of release. We shall only grow more hopeless and discouraged. The snare will seem so strong, so biting, so cunningly laid. Look at it and at yourself and you will despair. But look at God: fix your eyes on Him *always* and " He will deliver your feet from the snare."

COMMON CAUSES OF DISCOURAGEMENT

1. We see that we are not conquering some fault, perhaps we have had more falls than before. Yet we have been trying, so we become discouraged and say, " There is no good trying! "

Ans. There is no reason to despond, because we have fallen oftener.

(*a*) We may *notice* our falls more, instead of the number being really greater.

(*b*) God may allow us to fall oftener either to humble us or to hide progress.

(*c*) Or the devil may be enraged and be attacking us more strongly.

Therefore, have courage, and keep your eyes on the Lord.

2. We find less delight, pleasure and sweetness in spiritual exercises than formerly.

Ans. No reason to despond or complain.

(*a*) Sweetness in prayer is a gift not a virtue, a pleasant but not a necessary thing. God gives it when, how and as He wills.

(*b*) His taking it away is often a favour, to raise the soul, to purify and ennoble it.

(*c*) If a punishment, it is a merciful and loving one, for which we should be thankful.

3. Mental prayer is not so easy as it used to be.

Hence: " I grow worse." But is this always a bad sign?

Ans. (*a*) It is a long work to grow in mental prayer, and a slow one.

(*b*) Dry meditations are often most profitable if we *try*, and pray.

(*c*) There may be no venial sin in want of readiness for prayer.

4. The multitude and vivid power of temptation discourage us.

Ans. (*a*) It may be the devil is angry because he is not gaining ground.

(*b*) The continuance of temptation may show we have not yielded. The dog goes on barking because he has not been let in.

(*c*) It may be a sign that a season of grace is coming. " We must, like Jacob, wrestle till dawn " (Faber, *Growth in Holiness*, p. 21).

5. The Sacraments (Confession and Communion) become insipid. Sensible savour gone.

Ans. (*a*) No proof we are not receiving them worthily.

(*b*) Bare faith is by far the best and safest road.

The one thing to do in times of discouragement is to " wait on the Lord," and " keep His way." Go about your duty. Mind little things as well as great. Do not take your eyes off our Lord, to say, " I am as I was; day after day passes, and yet no light, no improvement." Go on.

" Wait on the Lord; do manfully and let thy heart take courage: and wait thou on the Lord " (Ps. xxvi, 14).

RECEPTION OF GRACE

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man shall hear My voice and open to me the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me" (Apoc. iii, 20.)

1. WHO is it that says, "Behold I stand?" The King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts, the Creator of all. What is He doing? Standing at the door of a sinner. Of a sinner, for if of a saint He would be in the soul. In His mercy He comes uninvited, for an invited guest finds the door open.

What excess of love and goodness to stand there waiting! How good Thou art, O God, not to have gone away! How miserable and sinful and wicked am I to have kept Thee waiting, unwilling to do Thy will!

2. The knock is the remorse of conscience—the voice is the inspiration of grace making known to you the will of God. To each one of us God has something to say, and if we hear His voice, we must take care to listen, for it is most disrespectful to turn away and not listen—yet how often have we done this to God?

Directly we hear His voice we must hasten to open the door by ready, prompt obedience to His will.

Immediately we open the door He will come in to us. He does not wait to be invited. He comes as a Friend to show us love; as a Comforter to console; as a rich Benefactor to give presents; as a Physician to heal; as a loving Father to embrace us in His arms of love.

What is the door? It is the obstacle we put to the entrance of our Lord into our hearts—it is our mortal sins (a complete obstacle), our wilful venial sins and infidelities, something we will not do, though we know it is God's will, something we will not give up though He asks us.

Reward of total surrender—He comes. O happy entrance of Jesus Christ our Divine Guest—we shall sup with Him. He is our guest; we are to feed Him, as our Guest, with fruits worthy of repentance—contrition, love, works of charity and piety.

" My meat is to do the will of Him Who sent Me." We feed Him, then, with his favourite food, when we do the Will of His Father, in the way He wills, and because He wills.

" I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me." (Ps. lxxxiv, 9).

" Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

" They would not hearken, they turned away the shoulder to depart, and they stopped their ears not to hear."

Open the door wide by generous resolutions—entertain Jesus Christ as your guest. Then you will sup with Him for ever in the Kingdom of His Father.

II

" As many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name " (John i, 12).

This is the reward, exceeding great, even in this world, bestowed on those that receive our Lord by faith and charity.

1. Notice how universal the promise is. It is

made to all without any exception whatever, for the true light, like the sun in the natural world, enlightens all. His gospel, the good news of salvation, " is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and to the Greek " (Rom. i, 16). Christ makes us all one; " there is neither Jew nor Greek: bond nor free: male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus " (Gal. iii, 28).

2. What does He give as the fruit of receiving Him? A truly magnificent reward. He gives us the power to be made the sons of God. We become the children of God by being made like Him, and this is done by our Lord in three ways:

(*a*) By pouring into our souls grace that makes us holy, and, therefore, whoever has sanctifying grace is the child of God—the highest possible rank, the grandest of all titles.

(*b*) Our Lord gives us power to become like Him by enabling us to do perfect works, by which we become His children, sons or daughters of God. For we are members of the body of Christ, and so our imperfect works are made excellent by union with Him.

(*c*) We hope to be made like God in the most perfect way by the possession of glory hereafter, which will extend even to the body. Of the soul it is said: " We are now sons of God. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him " (1 John, iii, 2). And of the body St Paul assures us, that Christ " will reform the body of our lowness, made like the body of His glory " (Phil. iii, 21). And of these two promises the same Apostle bids us " wait for the adoption of the sons of God " (Rom. viii, 23).

By baptism we are already children of God, members of Christ, and heirs of His kingdom; why then is it said that our Lord gives us " power to become the sons of God "? The grace given us when by faith and charity we open the door, and bid Him enter, enables us by holy works to attain to everlasting life. " The grace of God is life everlasting " (Rom. vi, 23). " He gave them " who received Him " power," the inpouring of grace, " to be made the sons of God " by good works, and by attaining to glory. We must use this power and not be idle. To be made like to God in glory, we must be made like to Christ through humility, obedience and charity. St Lewis Bertrand, after contemplating this truth, was transported out of himself, and kept repeating, " We can be the sons of God; We can become the sons of God! " What else is worth desiring and labouring for in this life?

" I have inclined my heart to do thy Will for ever,
On account of the reward " (Ps. cxviii, 112).

Let us reflect more deeply on the wonderful favour God does us poor, sinful creatures by giving us the grace through Jesus Christ, of being His adopted children. This, says St Thomas (3ª. qu. 23, Art. 1.), is far above every kind of human adoption. It is far more a work of love. God does not adopt us on account of any good He sees in us, but, by adopting us, bestows true good on us. When a man adopts a son, he cannot by that fit him to become his son, but rather chooses him, because he considers him already fit to enter his family. But the divine adoption has

this excellence, that God makes the man He deigns to adopt, fit, by the gift of grace, to receive the heavenly inheritance. This benefit exceeds all other gifts, that God should call a man his son, and that man should be able to speak of God as Father.

Now an adopted son has the right to bear the name of his adopted father. Is this the case with us? Being the adopted son of God, can you be called a god? If any preacher said this even of our Lady, the highest of God's adopted children, what would be thought? Yet what does God Himself say?

" I have said you are gods,
" And all of you the sons of the Most High "
(Ps. lxxxi, 6).

And our Lord Himself (John x, 34) quotes these words. Receive Christ then, by faith and charity, for as many as receive Him have power given them to be made the sons of God, to them who believe in His Name.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

Matt. xxii, 35, 40: Mark xii, 28, 34

The idea we should form of the three loves:

Of God.
Of our neighbour.
Of ourselves.

In these passages of St Matthew and St Mark three loves are mentioned, the love of God, the love of our neighbour, and the love of ourselves; and we should understand the difference between them, in order to understand the different ways in which they are spoken of in the Gospel.

1. *Love of God* is a love of homage, adoration, religion, obedience, thanksgiving, devotion, confidence, taking delight in Him and resting on Him; this kind of love we owe to the Infinite Being, Who is Himself all perfection, good in Himself and bountiful and merciful to us: the fountain of good, the centre of love, the one Being able to make us perfectly happy. It is a love of the creature for the Creator; the servant for the omnipotent Master; the poor man for the infinite Benefactor; the son for the most tender Father. This love is clearly claimed by every sort of title on God's part, and includes duties of every kind, as a little reflection will prove. This love demands all our powers and faculties, all our strength and activity, all our being. "This is all man." To this love everything should be submitted, all should yield, all should be referred. Why are not our hearts carried away

by this love? How badly have I observed this the most important and essential command!

2. *The love of my neighbour* is a love of equity, charity, help and benevolence. I owe to my neighbour what I have a right to expect from him. My love for him ought to make me treat him as I reasonably desire him to treat me. This is the rule of love by which we should think of others, speak of and to them, write about them, justify and excuse them, help them, rejoice at their good, grieve over their evil, desire their advantage, procure them every advantage, aid and help them.

This all applies to each individual man; moreover, in his life as a Christian and as a citizen, there may be occasions in which love of others extends much more widely and obliges him to the sacrifice of rest, fortune, health, and even life itself, when it is necessary to do so in the service of the country, and for the good of souls and defence of holy Church.

3. *The love of ourselves.*

This love is entirely different from the two others, and is a natural, though sanctified, feeling, inseparable from ourselves, by which we desire to be happy, and seek the good we have not, and rejoice in the good we possess. In reality it is not so much love, as the basis and bond of love, which joins us to those objects, the possession of which makes us happy.

We are the subject which receives happiness and is happy, but we are not the object which causes happiness. Love of ourselves in this sense is not commanded because it is an essential part of our being, it is necessary and not free, but it greatly requires regulating, and to have its direc-

tion governed and controlled, lest it become our last end instead of God.

RULES FOR THESE THREE LOVES

1. *Rule for the love of God.* The love of God is itself the rule and the last end of all love. It is the love of preference, to which all other love ought to yield and be directed. We must prefer this love to all else. God must be loved more than all created things, more than ourselves; and this means that we must sacrifice our pleasures and all interests of our own, however dear to us; yea, our very lives, to observe His Law and do His Will, because it is His Will. We ought to love created things, and ourselves among them, only for God, according to His Will and in Him. Try to realize how enormous must be the crime of putting a created thing in the place of God, loving it against the Will of God, putting our happiness in it and cleaving to it without relation or reference to God. What an outrage it must be to put *ourselves* in the place of God, to desire to be the centre of respect and homage without any regard to God or reference to Him, as if we would make ourselves the centre of happiness, the source and fountain of good to others.

All this is the most terrible reversal of order, an abomination, a simple idolatry worthy of eternal punishment.

2. *Rule for the love of others.*

The second precept of love is like the first, because the lawful love of others falls back entirely on the love of God, and has entire reference to God. When we love another according to God's

Will and in obedience to His command, our neighbour whom we love is neither the motive nor the end of the love we bear him. The motive is God's Will, the end is God's love. Whether our neighbour be good or bad, friend or enemy, grateful or ungrateful, whether worthy or unworthy of our love, we ought to love him for God's sake, in reference to God, because God wills it, commands it, and has engraven this law on our hearts. A man then would woefully deceive himself who flattered himself he loved God, but did not love his neighbour.

To love God is to love His will. His Will is that we should love all others for His sake. If we do not do this we do not love His Will, and if we do not love His Will we do not love God.

The rule of the love of others is to love them as ourselves, not with an equal feeling of love, but with equal sincerity, doing the duties of charity, treating others as we should desire and have a right to expect to be treated by others. This rule is not opposed to the order of charity which begins with ourselves.

In the case of equal rights and wants, we can prefer ourselves if the question is about temporal matters, and we must do so in spiritual things. We must prefer our own soul to all, and may never commit sin to help others. Likewise the order of charity should make us prefer first our relations, friends, those under our care, then public persons, ecclesiastic or civil, our king and country, etc.*

*Theologians hold

(*a*) That if our neighbour is in extreme spiritual necessity we are bound to help him, even at the risk of our own lives, provided that we are certain of relieving him effectually; that if he is in extreme temporal necessity we

3. *Rule for the love of ourselves.*

In this world we are in a state of pilgrimage, not in our end and lasting happiness. We have here no lasting city, but we look for another.

As we have two lives to lead, one here and one hereafter, we have also in a way two selves, the first in this world, which we must hate and sacrifice, in order to love and preserve the second, which belongs to the next world.

There are two kinds of happiness. The first, belonging to this world, comes from created things; it is false, cannot content us, perishes and is presented to us to prove us. The second, in the world to come is true, eternal, completely satisfying and solid. It is real, and the reward of those who have sustained the time of trial and who have renounced the false to embrace the true happiness. It is the portion of those who have loved God, the only One worthy of being loved for His own sake, the one source of true happiness, and not created things unworthy of love and unable to satisfy the heart. But the love of ourselves or self love is ardent and restless. Its impatience makes it attach itself to the first object that it finds. Faith, Grace, and the Love of God are alone able to curb this im-

are bound to help him, but not at the cost of grave danger to our own lives:

(*b*) That if our neighbour is in grave necessity (whether spiritual or temporal), we are not bound to help him at any very great sacrifice on our part, unless we have some official position, or are under contract to do so, or are under obligations of blood-relationship, etc.:

(*c*) That if our neighbour is only in ordinary necessity we are never absolutely bound to relieve him.

This is, of course, giving merely the extent of our obligations; and is not at all the most perfect ideal supposed by the Church. The history of Christian virtue shows that in practice the saints have gone much further in their love of man for God.

petuosity, to show us the truth, to strengthen us against illusions, to keep us in the dispositions necessary to enable us to persevere in doing violence to ourselves and overcoming ourselves in hoping for the Sovereign Good.

To change the object, to pervert the order of these three loves; for instance, to love ourselves first, and God for our own sake, and our neighbour for our own sake, would be a horrible crime. It would be nothing less than idolatry and would outrage the holy law of God, oppose all the nature of God, contradict all the teachings of the prophets, all the commands of the Gospel, all the doctrine of the Apostles. It would be to put self in the place of God.

" Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

OBEDIENCE

THE Incarnation is the mystery of Obedience. The religious life, being the continuation of the Incarnation, is a system of obedience.

Our Lord's obedience was, and in the Blessed Sacrament is,

(*a*) Universal in all and to all.

(*b*) Generous.

(*c*) Uncomplaining.

There is no difficulty in external obedience; religious obedience is not half so hard as that of servants, clerks, soldiers, sailors, married women. No house, firm, club, etc., can exist without obedience.

What, then, is the difficulty of religious obedience?

It consists in making our obedience truly a virtue, that is, interior and supernatural. Why is that difficult? On account of our deep-rooted pride and self love. Only God's grace can say to the mountain of pride, "Be ye taken up and cast into the sea of humility and it shall be done."

Compare your obedience as far as the external part is concerned with that of

1. Soldiers and sailors.
2. Shop girls and factory hands.
3. Women in humble life, and often in higher life, married to tyrannical, unreasonable, passionate men.

When have you ever been told to do that which was really unreasonable, tyrannical, dangerous

to life or health, really degrading and insulting? Never; your superiors are most reasonable, careful, tender.

" The Will of God is never better done than when we obey our superiors " (St Vincent de Paul).

" Servants be obedient . . . in the simplicity of your hearts " (Eph. vi, 5).

Obey the superior and the rule for the sake of Jesus Christ, as representing Jesus Christ, to make yourself like Jesus Christ; obey Jesus Christ in them and you will grow holy. Neither ask nor refuse any duty.

" Obedience is the Mother and Guardian of all virtues," writes St Augustine (*De Civit. Dei.* xiv, 12).

It is the most meritorious sacrifice. Corrupt nature hates all dependence.

It is the best way of becoming like Jesus Christ. " He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross " (Phil. ii, 8). " My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work." " Jesus therefore said to them: When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath taught me, these things I speak: And He that sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone: for I do always the things that please Him " (John iv, 34; viii, 28). " And whereas indeed He was the Son of God He learned obedience by the things which He suffered " (Heb. v, 8). " But that the world may know that I love the Father: And as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I. Arise, let us go hence " (John xiv, 31).

Fruits of obedience.

1. The truly obedient religious is certain of salvation.

2. Obedience is the royal way to know and do God's Will. We must not distinguish between the rule and the superior who interprets it.

Obedience is the way of peace and safety, and it is from this peace that the hundredfold chiefly comes.

Qualities of Perfect Obedience.

1. Supernatural, not given to the person. " Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart " (Eph. vi, 6).

2. Universal—in all that we are commanded.

3. Simple, prompt and joyful.

" To wish to withdraw oneself from obedience is to withdraw oneself from grace " (*Imitation*, iii, 13). St Gregory said, " Do you want to have an abridgment of the Rule of St Benedict? Read his life."

" Obey your prelates and be subject to them. For they watch as having to render an account of your souls: that they may do this with joy, and not with grief. For this is not expedient for you " (Heb. xiii, 17).

" Obedience is the short road to perfection."

" From a soul resolved to love God He requires nothing but obedience " (St Teresa).

" The obedient man shall speak of victory."

JESUS, THE ONE WAY OF SALVATION

1. JESUS is the Son of God and the Son of Man. All good is in Him as God, every gift as Man. As possessing all good, He is our last end; as having the fulness of every gift, He is our one only way of salvation.

Love Jesus, then, as your end, love Him, too, as the means to the end. Seek nothing out of Him in whom you have all. You will always find Him:

(*a*) Full of Grace, for He is the peace of the world, the Lamb giving peace:

(*b*) Full of Truth, for He is the Word of the Father:

(*c*) Full of Beauty. "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men" (Ps. xliv, 3):

(*d*) Full of Virtue, for He is the Saint of saints and of His fulness we have all received (St John, i, 16):

(*e*) Always full of Glory, for He is the mirror without stain of the Divine Wisdom, reflecting upon us the light of God. "Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever."

2. It is in vain then to search for various means of arriving at perfection and to change them often; they will all be found in Jesus Christ, who changes not. Without Him you can do nothing. You go to God by the good use of created things, but without the grace of Jesus you may be hurt but can never be helped by them. You go to God by suffering patiently, joyfully; but it is the grace of Jesus Christ that has sanctified suffering, His

example that makes it sweet to suffer. By taking on Himself suffering He has deified it. You go to God by the practice of virtues, but it is Jesus Christ who is the Model and gives the grace.

O Jesus, may I never be separated from Thee. Thou art the Way which, if I quit, I am lost; Thou art the Truth, which, if I leave, I am in the darkness of error; Thou art the Life, which if I give up I shall fall into death.

3. " Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved? " (Cant. viii, 5).

Think how the soul that truly loves God goes up the mountain of holiness, leaning on Jesus Christ her Beloved, and you will learn how to go to Jesus by means of Jesus, leaning on Him, and at the same time this will teach you your faults.

(*a*) The true Spouse leaning on her Beloved mounts to God with sweet alacrity, you wearily.

(*b*) She ascends constantly, you often fall back.

(*c*) She goes straight on, you advance not, because you only turn round and round in the circle of your imperfections and futile wishes. *Impii in circuitu ambulant.*

(*d*) She ascends without interruption, your life is inconstant.

(*e*) She ascends with marvellous speed, you slowly.

Why this difference?

Because she leans on her Beloved, and you know not how to avail yourself of His favours.

O Jesus, I will lean on Thee! Be Thou my support. " Draw me: we will run after Thee in the odour of Thine ointments " (Cant. i, 3).

"IN THE MIDST OF THE SEA"

TRIBULATIONS IN GOD'S SERVICE

1. "FORTHWITH Jesus obliged His disciples to go up into the boat, and to go before Him over the water" (Matt. xiv, 22).

A voyage thus begun we should have thought would be most prosperous. It was undertaken by a direct command of our Lord Himself. The disciples embarked and began their journey in order to do the Will of God. Surely it will be a most favourable one!

On the contrary, they met an adverse wind, rough seas and everything that was difficult.

"But the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves: for the wind was contrary" (Matt. xiv, 24).

The sea raged, the wind howled, the little boat was tossed about—and Jesus was not there!

"The waters roared and were troubled," but still the disciples could say, and perhaps did say, "God is our refuge and our strength; our Helper in the troubles that have come upon us heavily" (Ps. xlv, 2). Our Lord was with them, but it was His Will they should have this difficulty. It is necessary to meet many troubles in His service, even when we are most truly doing His Will, but He is ever our strength and our refuge, a harbour of refuge and a fortress of strength.

2. Why does God allow these tribulations?

It was our Lord's intention that this storm and the labour and difficulties endured by the dis-

ciples should be the means of showing His watchful love and how truly He was their refuge and their strength. God often allows many tribulations to befall us in order to make us long for Him, think of Him, turn to Him, trust in Him, and call upon Him for help.

3. What should we do in time of tribulation?

Far from losing courage, we ought to redouble our efforts in His service and work fearlessly, however loudly the winds and waves may roar. We must be sure that our Lord sees and knows all, and awaits His own time. In His own time He will come, even walking on the waters of tribulation.

" The Lord of Hosts is with us:
The God of Jacob is our Protector " (Ps. xlv, 12).

4. " And in the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking upon the sea. And they seeing Him . . . were troubled . . . and they cried out for fear. And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying: Be of good heart: it is I, fear ye not " (Matt. xiv, 25–27).

As we grow in the spiritual life we increase in our knowledge of Christ. In the first days of our conversion we know Jesus Christ, but our knowledge is very weak, and slight, and full of fear.

Jesus came to them walking on the water, " and He would have passed by them." They all saw a figure in the dim light and " they thought it was an apparition and they cried out." They were afraid. They cried out for fear. And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, " It is I: fear ye not. Be of good heart." Often in trouble we cry out, and He answers in our hearts. He often

comes to us in that very tribulation which hides Him from us, and He says, " Be of good heart: it is I, fear not."

5. After we have had more experience of Jesus, we advance in the way of virtue and we love Him fervently.

Peter, full of impetuous love, hearing the voice of his Master, cries out, " If it be Thou, bid me to come to Thee upon the waters " (Matt. xiv, 28).

Bid me come to Thee! and He said, " Come! " Then Peter walked upon the water to come to Jesus. Fervent love offers itself for any service and believes nothing to be impossible. Love is ready for all.

6. St Peter walks happily towards Jesus as long as He looks at Him alone, but the moment he looks at himself and the waves he sinks. Look at Jesus, not at self or at danger. Fear and discouragement come from looking at self, thinking of self. When St Peter began to sink he cried out, " Lord, save me." And *immediately* Jesus stretched out His hand, took hold of him, and said, " O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? "

7. The third step is the knowledge and love of perfect souls. This knowledge and love give joy and restful peace.

Jesus and Peter entered the boat. And the wind ceased. Calm reigned around. Then they adored Jesus, saying, " Indeed Thou art the Son of God."

In tribulations and trials, however distressing, if we call upon Him He will come and will bring with Him peace and joy.

" They that are faithful in love shall rest in Him."

Cp. pp 256 f. The Spirit of Mortification.

MEANS TO SWEETEN MORTIFICATION

On hearing all that the saints have done to mortify themselves and all that they strongly urge us to do, constantly and perseveringly, to quell our passions and so bring all the faculties of the soul and the senses of the body under the dominion of Charity, worldly men consider that a religious life must be most miserable. And even Christians and tepid religious, who are immortified and unrestrained, who find all their delight in vain and idle gratifications, reading newspapers, gossiping, eating and drinking to the full, sleeping immoderately, etc., cannot understand the sense of continued mortification. "God is good and kind," they say, "a merciful and loving Father, and He cannot, therefore, will that we should be miserable and our life a sad burden by constant mortification. He has said Himself, 'My yoke is sweet and My burden light,' therefore He cannot desire us to cut off from ourselves all pleasure. We must not be sad, sour-faced puritans," etc.

So argues flesh and blood. Nature, pretending to desire to please God and under that pretence pleasing herself.

It is true that God wills not our unhappiness and desires us rather to be full of joy and peace, but this joy and peace is only to be found in the constant and ever-growing spirit and practice of mortification. How is this? What is it that can sweeten penance and change its bitterness into delight?

1. *God's grace.* " My grace is sufficient for thee " (2 Cor. xii, 9). " I am able to do all things in Him who strengtheneth me " (Phil. iv, 13). Mortification is a *yoke,* but two bear it, Jesus Christ and the soul, and He takes by far the greater share. " I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love, and I will be to them as one that taketh off the yoke on their jaws " (Osee, xi, 4).

St Augustine owns in his *Confessions* that before he knew the power of grace he thought chastity impossible, but afterwards he found it easy. " His commandments are not heavy," because grace makes them light.

2. *Love.* The power of love is immense, immeasurable. " Work is weariness to such as do not love. Love alone puts even the name of difficulty to shame. To love is not to toil " (St Augustine). We can measure our love to God by the greater or less difficulty we feel in things, and this ought to make us blush, indeed, when we find such very small things so intolerably difficult as we often do. Why? Because we have so little love. What is more powerful than love? What painful things it makes men do every day? A mother gladly loses sleep, night after night, because she loves her baby, and a wife will stand for days by the sick bed of the husband she loves and deny herself all pleasure if he dies. Pleasures that she enjoyed before have now lost all sweetness, because he is not there.

What has our love for God made us do so far? How can there be love if it does not show its power?

" Where love is there is no toil, but sweetness,"

St Augustine says in his sermon on Cant. lxxxv. If, then, the least thing is such a labour, where is our love? And what are we without love?

" Love is strong as death " (Cant. viii, 6).

(*a*) As death separates the body from the soul, so love separates the soul from corporal and sensible things, and she can then say, " I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me " (Gal. ii, 20).

(*b*) St Augustine thus explains these words. As nothing can resist death when it comes, neither riches, nor learning, etc., so, when the love of God comes, nothing can hold the soul enchained, nothing can keep it back. Love is so strong that, if we love, nothing can separate us from Christ, " Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord " (Rom. viii, 38, 39).

The more we mortify ourselves the more we love. Now love is the greatest possible happiness, therefore the more we practise mortification the happier we must become.

If *our* mortification is a test of our love, how very slight that love must be!

3. *Hope of Future Reward.*

Job comforted himself thus, " For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God" (Job xix, 25, 26); and he wished his words to be written on lead, that all in future might comfort themselves with the same consoling thought.

" By faith Moses," as St Paul says, " when he was grown up, denied himself to be the son of Pharao's daughter: rather choosing to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians. For he looked *unto the reward*" (Heb. xi, 24, 25, 26); and David, " I have inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever, *for the reward*" (Ps. cxviii, 112).

" And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown: but we an incorruptible one " (1 Cor. ix, 25).

Is the reward worth the labour and pain of constant mortification for many years?

To know this we must consider what the reward is.

" *I* am thy protector, and *thy reward exceeding great*" (Gen. xvi, 1).

" Let thy heart dwell on the divine promises, that they may spur thee on in the way of goodness " (St Basil). " For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us " (Rom. viii, 18).

" For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory " (2 Cor. iv, 7).

The less time and labour a man spends in sowing, the less plentiful will be his harvest.

" Each idle hour loses as much glory, as we might meanwhile have wrought good " (St Bonaventure).

4. *The Example of Jesus Christ Suffering.*

What can better sweeten the labour and suffering of mortification? "And therefore we also having so great a cloud of witnesses over our head, laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us; looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. For think diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. For you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. xii, 1–4).

"But he cried to the Lord, and he shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, they were turned into sweetness" (Exod. xv, 25). The wood which sweetened the bitter water is the Cross. St Ignatius at first mortified himself chiefly as penance for sin, but afterwards rather to liken himself to Christ.

"Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. iv, 10).

"Under a Head crowned with thorns, it ill befits the members to be pampered" (St Bernard, *Sermon, 7, Quadrages*).

We can also urge ourselves on to the love of mortification by considering:

(*a*) The great punishments we deserve.

(*b*) Our daily sins.

(*c*) The constant benefits of God to us.

THE LOVE OF JESUS

REPRESENT to your mind St Paul on fire with the love of Jesus, and crying out, " I live in the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved me " (Gal. ii, 20).

Ask our Lord to bestow on you true and ardent love.

He first loved me.

Consider the One who loves, the one beloved, the way He loves, the motive of love.

1. *The One who loves.*

Who has loved me? Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who, after a laborious and suffering life, has risen, and sits for ever on the right hand of the Father. He—the greatest, the most holy, the best, most powerful, most wise. How happy to be loved so much by so great and holy a Lover. This alone should satisfy me, even if no one else loved me. In this love will I rejoice. I will thank Him and care little for human love. " It is good for me to adhere to God, to put my hope in the Lord God " (Ps. lxxii, 28). Is this the real disposition of my soul?

2. *The one beloved.*

Whom does our Lord Jesus love? He loves me, so insignificant, so sinful and so wicked.

(*a*) So insignificant. What am I compared to all men? A drop in the ocean. What are all men compared to the angels and saints in Paradise? What are all created things compared to God? What then am I?

(*b*) So sinful. Cannot I say of myself St Augus-

tine's words: " so little and yet so sinful." Would that I had at least ceased to sin as a religious! O Lord Jesus, I humble myself before Thee, considering my corruption and sinfulness. I am full of evil and stained with iniquity.

(*c*) So wicked. Thou didst choose me, O God, that I should be holy and unspotted in charity, and I have been sinful and destitute of virtue and self love. Thou didst choose me and set me to go and bear fruit, and I have not borne fruit. Thou hast called me to follow Thee, Thou hast invited me, attracted me, urged me, and how ungenerously, carelessly and slothfully have I obeyed!

In justice, O Lord, Thou mightest long ago have rejected me, a useless servant, a cowardly soldier, a disobedient disciple, but hitherto Thou hast patiently borne with me. I trust in Thee. For if Thou hast been so loving when I wilfully sinned, much more wilt thou love me if I become better and more faithful to Thee. Now will I begin!

3. *The way our Lord has shown His love.*

How has Jesus loved me?

(*a*) Truly; desiring my happiness with His whole Heart, and showing Himself in every way solicitous for my salvation.

(*b*) Manifestly; the Gospel is full of passages that show His love. " As the Father hath loved Me, so I have loved you " (John xv, 9).

(*c*) Generously; by enriching me with graces and benefits.

(*d*) Constantly; in spite of miseries, sins, cowardice, sloth, diffidence and most abominable tepidity.

What has my love to Jesus hitherto been? True? manifest? generous? constant?

4. *The motive of Christ's love.*

Why has Jesus loved me? He has loved me freely, for my good, not for any advantage I could be to Him. He needs nothing. What could He expect from me, so little, such a sinner, so poor, so wicked? Am I willing and prepared to love Him freely, without consolation or comfort, even at the cost of health, goods and fame? I will speak heart to heart with Jesus, as one friend to another; as a servant to his master; as a son to his father; now asking some grace, now accusing myself of sin, now offering all I have and asking advice and light.

St Thomas says that three qualities render a person lovable:

1. Cheerfulness in our countenance.
2. Kindliness in our dealings.
3. Meekness in our deeds.

Jesus Christ possesses these three in the highest degree. He is, therefore, above all others worthy of love.

GOOD DESIRES

THE first movement of grace is the true desire of conversion and holiness.

"The beginning of her (Wisdom, holiness) is the *most true* desire of discipline" (Wisd. vi, 18).

When speaking of holiness we always lay down that good desire is the first step.

Alvarez de Paz says, "As the wickedness of the heart of man takes its rise from the desire of evil, by which desire the soul is excited to sin and to add sin to sin: so the highest perfection of the same heart must begin from the desire of good, by which habits of virtue are formed" (I, II. lib. v, p. 285).

Cornelius a Lapidé says, "Just as the desire of health, or science, or art, so is the desire of wisdom a great principle of knowledge and virtue (*in cap.* vi. *sap*).

The reason of the necessity of good desires is thus stated by St Bonaventure: "The warmth of holy desire should go before the face of God unto every soul to whom He is coming; and it will thus burn away the rust of sin and prepare a place for the Lord."

God, by good desires, rubs off from the soul the rust of sin.

The evil of not having good desires, ardent and high aspirations, is thus expressed by St Alphonsus: "A soul," he says, "without good desires is good for nothing, and everything is to be feared for it."

(*a*) *It is good for nothing.* A person with no desire

to advance in love may be a Christian, but not a good Christian. The first desire of perfection is a grace, not a virtue; a grace given by God in proportion to the degree of virtue to which He means the soul to rise. If this grace is allowed to remain sterile and useless, how can the soul please God?

Alvarez de Paz writes: "If thou hast not the desire thou wilt never fly sin as thou oughtest, nor bewail ill habits, nor bridle thy lawless passions, nor shake off the yoke of thy foe, nor love virtue, nor seek to live an inner life with God and heavenly things, nor set thyself earnestly and heartily to toil and watchfulness."

It is evident that without a strong desire of holiness, we shall never take pains to acquire it.

(*b*) *For a soul without a strong desire of holiness all is to be feared.*

He who has only a weak and small desire of advancing in the love of God, instead of tending earnestly to perfection, will always get colder and colder and runs a terrible risk of falling over the precipice.

On the contrary, strong desires are an immense help to perfection. They make souls *fly* along the road to God. According to St Laurence Justinian, "Holy desires give strength to the soul, and take away the difficulties of virtue."

(*a*) *They give strength.* Desire gives energy. Look what the desire of riches makes men do and give up. The true desire of heaven will do more. St Laurence Justinian says again, "A good part of conquest is the will to conquer."

(*b*) *They diminish the difficulties.* God loves and gives grace to those who have high and generous

desires. God never leaves a single good desire without reward.

God hates bad desires and punishes them, and as His mercy is above all His works, how much more certain is it that He will reward good ones. " The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor; Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart " (Ps. ix, 38).

" To him that thirsteth I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely " (Apoc. xxi, 6).

St Ambrose writes: " The will to go onward and the unfailing effort to grow in virtue and perfection is so pleasing to God, that He ever showers upon it His good gifts and graces."

The fruits and advantages of good desires are so many and great that it is necessary to know how to increase them.

1. One good desire begets another and a better. We must go from one to the other. " He hath filled the hungry with good things " (Luke i, 53).

2. Good desires grow by prayer. We must ask for ardent desires. " But if any of you want wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him " (Jas. i, 5).

" As a man who wishes his servant to do something gives him the means to do it, so with great longings, which are the means of reaching perfection, does God enkindle the hearts of such as He wishes to lead to perfection " (Alvarez de Paz).

3. Good desire is strengthened by meditation. In mental prayer God gives us good desires.

" This is the power of meditation, to beget a hatred of evil, and to enkindle the love of good."

" The desire of the just is all good " (Prov.

xi, 23). " Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill " (Matt. v, 6).

What kind of desire should we have of union with God by love? It should be:

1. Strong and generous. We should start with a strong resolve rather to die than to commit deliberate venial sin.

2. Ardent and unquenchable (Matt. v, 6).

" It is just and right that our desire should be ardent in proportion to the greatness of the good we desire " (Alvarez de Paz).

It is good to form heroic desires, e.g., to love God more than all the saints, to suffer for Him more than the martyrs, to pardon all kinds of injuries, to welcome all pains to save one soul, for if we desire the highest things, we may do at least little ones. Aim high that you may hit.

3. Constant and persevering. Not a mere intermitting fever, but a constantly burning fire.

" And I said, Now have I begun: this is the change of the right hand of the Most High " (Ps. lxxvi, 11).

Desire is very necessary, and should always go on increasing; desire of God, desire to please God, desire to see God and to know Him, love Him, serve Him. No one will labour to gain what he does not desire. " The greater the charity, the greater the desire; and desire makes its possessor in a measure *fit* and *ready* to receive what he desires. Whoever has most charity will see God most perfectly and will be most blessed " (1 Qu. 12, Art. 6).

" As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God."

" My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God? " (Ps. xli, 3).

Is a real desire for God compatible with a hatred of the thought of leaving this world, and going to God in eternity? Would the thirsty hart dread to see the water-springs drawing near? If my soul panted after God should I dread the thought of going before the countenance of the strong, living God?

A true desire of God implies a real, constant, and practical desire of what will lead the soul to Him, a desire, therefore, of humility and humiliations, penance, suffering and love.

What shall I do to show our Lord that I love Him and desire Him?

To desire Him is to desire His Will, because it is His Will, and in the way He Wills.

p. 312.

HUMILITY

"Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvi, 5).

THE one thing we ought to desire is to be pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ. What use is anything else? What other meaning is there in your life? To please Him you left your home and your father's house; to please Him you have subjected yourselves to a strict and penitential rule, and if you were asked by anyone, "What has made you give up all worldly advantages and live in poverty, chastity, and obedience?" you would reply at once, without hesitation, "I did it to please the Lord." "We labour . . . to please Him." This will be an ample reward for all you have to give up or to suffer, if you can "please Him."

This being the case, how serious, how full of awe, are the words of the Holy Ghost, "Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord." In spite of all I do as a religious; in spite of fasting, prayer, regularity, and all other observances; in spite of poverty, chastity and obedience, if I have not humility, if I am proud, I am simply "an abomination to the Lord." As far as I am proud, and instead of despising myself and wishing others to despise me, I prefer myself in my own mind and desire praise and esteem, I am abominable in God's eyes. What a fearful prospect it would be to live a strict, mortified, penitential life for twenty, thirty, forty years, and then find at the end that you were abominable in His sight.

What is meant by abominable? It means hateful, detestable, revolting, unclean. How terrible to be that in the sight of God, in the eyes of Jesus, Mary, and all the angels and saints. To one of the saints our Lord said: "In hell there are many who were virgins, but not one humble soul." Could anything convince us more strongly of the absolute necessity of humility? The humble soul is pleasing to Him in spite of many imperfections and weaknesses: the proud soul is abominable in His sight in spite of many apparent virtues.

Why is a proud man abominable in God's sight?

1. Because humility is truth, and pride is utterly untrue. Now God is truth. He must love truth, for in loving truth He loves Himself: falsehood and deceit of every kind He must hate as a thing contrary to Himself. When we have genuine humility, we are true, we shine with the light of truth, and truth makes us comely and attractive in the eyes of God; pride, on the other hand, darkens the soul, deforms it and renders it odious to God because it is false and deceitful. "Thou hatest all those who work iniquity, Thou wilt destroy all those that speak a lie" (Ps. v, 7). A proud soul is a living lie. It is constantly looking upon itself as good, whereas of itself it has no good, for "One is good, God." It considers its good qualities and thinks they spring from self, but they belong to God and are the fruits of His grace. It prefers itself to others, because it always looks at its own virtues, real or imaginary and compares them with the defects of others, instead of "esteeming others better than itself," by looking at what is from God in them and what is its own in itself. The proud always desire praise and glory for

some good they do not possess or which at least belongs to God and not to them. They are, therefore, however many good works they may do, an abomination to the Lord.

2. Where there is no humility there can be no virtue pleasing to God, but only an appearance of virtue, a hollow pretence, hypocrisy. God is better satisfied by humility amidst small and imperfect things than in great and wonderful actions done with pride, to gain honour, and not for His Glory, for self and not for God. Nothing in His sight is truly great unless done to please Him, and nothing is small and insignificant that is done to give Him glory and to praise Him. The greater and more apparently heroic a thing is, therefore, the more odious is it to Him if done to exalt self and to gain applause. Every proud man is, therefore, an abomination to the Lord.

3. " He that loveth cleanness of heart . . . shall have the King for his friend " (Prov. xxii, 11). Now humility is cleanness of heart—pride, uncleanness. Purity is to the body what humility is to the soul. Pride is the impurity of the soul and impurity is the pride of the body, and the impurity of the soul must be as much more abominable before God than the impurity of the body, as the soul itself is more valuable in His eyes than the mere body. To love true cleanness of heart, then, is to be really humble and this it is that makes the King of Heaven our friend. Uncleanness of heart and soul, or pride, renders us defiled in His sight, an object of horror and detestation. Purity is to be undefiled. Pure water is that mingled with no foreign substance. Pure wine is unmixed with anything, even water. And so

purity of heart or will must have one single, simple motive in everything, that is, to seek God alone and for His own sake; and this is humility. To do the contrary, to seek self instead of God, which is pride, is to be hateful to God, and every proud man, as far as he is proud, must be an abomination to the Lord.

4. The only way in which we poor sinful men can become pleasing in the eyes of God, is by becoming conformed to the image of His Son (Romans viii, 29). In proportion to our likeness to Him, do we become objects of pleasure and delight in the sight of God. If we are unlike Christ and not conformed to his image, we are odious and detestable in God's sight. Now how can we be the least like Him who humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross (Phil. ii, 8), except by humility? Humility does make us like Him, whose first lesson is "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." In as far, therefore, as God sees pride in us, we must be an abomination to Him.

There is one God only: if He is against me who will save me, to whom could I fly? Therefore how intensely should I abominate and loathe pride that will make me an abomination to Him.

If any degree of contempt is shown me by anyone, am I angry, full of resentment, or am I full of joy and gratitude? Do I bear reproof well? If I came to the knowledge that my superior considered me the worst religious in the convent, the most stupid in the house, what would be my feeling? Do I desire honour or humiliation? Am I an abomination to the Lord?

Saint Teresa writes (*Way of Perfection*, ch. 13): "For us to desire to share in the Kingdom of our Lord, and yet to refuse any part in labours and contempt is unreasonable. Let her who thinks she is esteemed as the least of all look on herself as the happiest of all, and truly so she is if only she bear it as she ought, for honour will not be wanting to her either in this life or the next—let her believe me in this—but what a foolish thing for me to say 'let her believe me,' when true Wisdom Himself has said the same thing."

The first part or species of humility is in the intellect, and is exercised by faith.

1. Is my faith so firm that I do not allow it to be darkened by the least doubt? Difficulties are inevitable, but doubts can always be avoided; difficulties are in the intellect, doubts in the will.

2. Do I show this firmness of faith in my conversations when matters of faith are mentioned?

3. Am I so led by the spirit of faith that nothing is able to disturb me?

4. Do I carefully abstain from reading what might injure or endanger my faith?

5. Am I careful to read books which will increase my faith and render it stronger?

The second kind of humility consists in diffidence in myself.

1. Do I not trust too much in my own powers, talents, learning, prudence, etc.?

2. Do I put too much trust in merely natural helps, neglecting to have recourse to supernatural assistance, e.g., in work for souls trusting to natural activity and neglecting prayer?

3. Do I trust so truly in the wisdom, power and love of God that I dare to hope for all things useful to me from Him, and humbly to ask for them without hesitation?

4. Is my trust in God so great that I feel certain that to ask anything of God and to obtain it are the same things, since our Lord Jesus Christ has said, "Ask and you shall receive"?

The third kind of humility is obedience.

1. Do I constantly obey God, never wilfully breaking any command of God?

2. Do I faithfully obey the Church, keeping faithfully all her precepts, as she represents the authority of God on earth?

3. Do I obey all my superiors, simply, promptly, trustfully, in a spirit of faith, looking on them as the legates and vicars of God?

"He that hears you hears Me."

The fourth kind of humility is patience.

1. Do I bear pains of mind and body uncomplainingly?

2. If anything is told to superiors about me, do I not immediately ask *who* told it of me, why and how he did it, that I may be able to avenge myself on him?

3. Do I in adversities and trials ever employ "triumphant silence" which, as St Augustine notices, our Lord employed against the snares of His enemies?

The fifth kind of humility is contempt of myself.

1. Do I not too much desire to be praised and appreciated by others, to be made much of?

2. Am I not too much vexed when my faults and defects are known by others?

3. Do I, with the saints, rejoice at all these occasions which enable me to humble myself?

O my God, give me grace perfectly to imitate Thy Son, who, "having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii, 2).

ON THE SPIRIT OF HUMILITY

To follow Christ I must put on His spirit and His "mind must be in me." The spirit of Jesus should live in me. His ideas should take the place of mine.

The spirit of Christ made the Apostles unconquerable and happy in every trial.

What is the spirit of Christ? It is the spirit of contradiction or of opposition, that is, an inclination or affection in all things opposed to the spirit of the world; what the world esteems Christ despised, what the world hates Christ loved, what the world desires Christ shunned.

This spirit is seen in His teaching, e.g. in the Beatitudes.

The spirit of Jesus is the spirit of humility. The world perished through pride: it can only be saved by humility. By the road of pride man went away from his home, his country (*patria*): he must return by the road of humility.

Has not our Leader gone by this way? See Him coming down from heaven, and, as St Gregory says, "covering the purple robe of His Divinity with the sackcloth of our mortal nature."

Does not St Paul say, "He emptied Himself"?

How rightly Thou sayest, O Lord, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

How ought I to be humble?

1. Above all and before all in mind. For this a right notion of glory is necessary. One kind of glory comes from men, another from God. The first is

often unjust, undeserved; always uncertain, inconstant, passing.

The second is always just, constant, eternal. "He who glories let him glory in the Lord."

2. I should be humble in language.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

(*a*) I should never boast or praise myself: self-praise defiles and lowers.

(*b*) I should talk little of myself, my own talents or doings.

These two things are ordinary, necessary even, for good manners and good sense, for a boaster and an egoist is a bore and a fool; but there is something higher, better and more refined in holiness, if, being attacked by lies and injurious words or actions, I remain silent as my Leader did. "But Jesus held His peace." St Augustine calls this a "triumphant silence." "Against the cunning of his foes He strove by silence."

By such silence we shall conquer.

3. I should be humble in act.

I should carefully shun ambition, for the devil constantly whispers to us, "Friend, go up higher." How many become miserable by listening! On the other hand, how happy is that man who takes the work given him, however humble and obscure, and does it with all possible diligence for God, without seeking anything else, e.g. the Curé d'Ars!

4. I should be humble in affection, loving humble duties, etc. Hear St Augustine: "Pride is the love of self carried so far as to despise God, humility is the love of God carried so far as to despise self." In this sense and conformable to this

doctrine are the three degrees of humility given by St Ignatius:

1. The first degree is necessary for salvation, that I should so submit and humble myself that for no earthly good, not even to preserve life, would I commit any mortal sin.

2. The second, more perfect degree, is that for no created thing, not for life itself, would I commit a wilful venial sin, and that where I see the service of God and my salvation to be the same in either alternative, I am not more inclined to have riches than poverty, honour than ignominy, a long life than a short one.

3. The third and most perfect, that where there is equal praise and glory to God, in order to imitate Christ our Lord and be more like Him, I should desire and choose rather poverty than riches, contempt than honour, rather to suffer than to be without suffering, to be esteemed a fool and useless with Christ than to be looked on as wise and prudent in this world.

ON THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD

It is disgraceful for a Christian, still more for a religious, to follow the principles of the world and not those of Christ.

1. Christ teaches us to seek the kingdom of God and His justice; the world honours riches, pleasures above all.

Is my first and greatest desire to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls? From my way of talking and acting do I not appear to seek the things of this life more than those that regard life eternal?

2. Christ teaches us to seek the last places; the world the first. Am I discontented with the lowly nature of my duties, and therefore aspire, at least in thoughts and desires to offices, dignities, etc.? Do I envy others who have more honourable duties? Am I ever heard to complain that I am passed over by my superiors?

3. Christ teaches us to forgive injuries and to bear contradictions and trials patiently: the world teaches that it is necessary for an honourable man to resent injuries and insults, and to resist all that is opposed to self love.

Do I allow injuries and insults to rankle in my mind? Do I refuse forgiveness and mercy to those who have offended me? Am I ever carried away to do or say something from a spirit of revenge? Do I strive patiently to endure things opposed to self-will? When I have something to endure, do I act like a man who understands the super-

natural value of tribulation, or like one who abhors the very shadow of suffering?

4. Christ teaches that it is better to give than to receive: the world teaches it is better and happier to increase the money we possess, and to add daily to our store, than to deprive ourselves of anything and bestow it on the poor.

Can it be said of me that "My hand is stretched out to receive, and shut when I should give" (Ecclus. iv, 36)? Do the poor detest the sight of me because they have reason to look on me as an avaricious, close-fisted man?

5. Christ teaches that cleanness of heart is the fountain of true happiness and that the sorrows of life and persecutions of men are a reason for joy and exultation: the world teaches that man is deprived of happiness if he does not satisfy the desires of the flesh, and that every contradiction and suffering is a just reason for sorrow and mourning.

Does my Angel Guardian see me drawing any delight from the poisoned fountains of the flesh, instead of the pure fountains of the Saviour? Have I ever, even once, sincerely rejoiced when a trial afflicted me, when I met any humiliation or became the victim of any persecution?

6. Do I in general speech judge and act in such a way that those skilled in the interior life would acknowledge that I am being led by the spirit of Jesus, or by the spirit of the world?

O Lord Jesus, grant that Thy Spirit may dwell in me and guide me in all that I do, so that I may hate what the world loves, and love what the world hates. Amen.

"THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

1. "I am the light of the world,
2. "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness,
3. "But shall have the light of life" (John viii, 12).

1. OUR Lord proclaims that He is the Light of the World. As the sun is the light of the material world, and by its light all other things are seen by the eye, even if the sun itself be over-shadowed by clouds, so in the intellectual and spiritual world Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. " He was the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world."

The heresy of Nestorius is confuted by these words. For if Jesus Christ had been only a man wonderfully enlightened by God, He could not truly have said, " I am the light of the world." It is God only, the Word of God, that is the true Light, that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. Our Lady is a woman in whom God wonderfully dwelt, enlightening her, but she could not have said, " I am the light of the world." She might have said, " In me dwelleth the light of the world." She was a light, but God only is *the* Light.

2. " He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness."

The effect of light is to dispel darkness: " walketh not in darkness." And because this light is universal, therefore it dispels and banishes all darkness universally.

There are three kinds of darkness:

1. The darkness of ignorance.

" They have not known nor understood:
They walk on in darkness " (Ps. lxxxi, 5).

This is darkness of the mind or reason, in itself.

2. Another kind of darkness is that of sin. "For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord " (Eph. v, 8).

This darkness is not of the reason in itself, but the effect of evil appetite or desire, inasmuch as the reason is badly disposed by passion or bad habit. It is so blind as to desire something as good which is not truly good.

3. Thirdly, there is the darkness of eternal damnation, of which we read in St. Matt. xxv, 30: " The unprofitable servant cast ye into exterior darkness."

The first two kinds of darkness are found in this life, and the third in the life to come.

He, therefore, who followeth Me, by believing and loving, walketh not in the darkness of ignorance, because I am the Truth: nor in the darkness of sin, for I am the Way: nor in the darkness of eternal damnation, for I am the Life.

3. " But shall have the Light of Life."

This is the fruit of following Christ. To have the Light of Eternal Life instead of the darkness of everlasting damnation. He says, " he who followeth Me," because as whoever does not wish to go astray in darkness must follow the guide who carries the light, so whoever desires to be saved must follow Christ, who is the light, by believing in Him and loving Him.

The light of the sun vanishes after sunset when night comes. But this true sun which never sets, cannot fail. He, therefore, who follows it hath light that cannot fail, that is, the Light of Life.

Natural light, visible to the eye, cannot give life, it only helps in an exterior way the operations of life; but this true spiritual light giveth life, because we live inasmuch as we have understanding, which is a certain participation of that true Light. But when that Light shall shine on us perfectly, then we shall have perfect life.

" For with Thee is the Fountain of Life:
And in Thy Light, we shall see Light " (Ps. xxxv, 10).

Then shall we have perfect life, when we shall see Him, Light itself, face to face.

Therefore our Lord, who is the true Light, has said, " Now this is Eternal Life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent " (John xvii, 3).

The words, " He that followeth Me " are for the state of service and merit. " He shall have the Light of Life," refer to the state of reward.

O Light of the world, only true Light, give me grace to follow Thee by faith, hope and charity. Let the Light of Thy countenance shine down upon me, that the darkness of ignorance and sin may not envelop me, and that I may not be cast into eternal darkness, but may have the Light of Life.

When our Lord said, " I am the Light of the world," the Pharisees answered, " Thou givest testimony of Thyself; Thy testimony is not true."

If our Lord had been only a man, this objection

would have been reasonable and true. How could any man say, " I am the Light of the world " ?

St John said, " I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness," For a man to praise himself is not fitting. " Let another praise thee and not thy own mouth: a stranger and not thy own lips " (Prov. xxvii, 2).

" For not he that commends himself is worthy of esteem, but him that God commends " (2 Cor. x, 18). God only perfectly knows a man.

On the other hand, no one can fittingly praise God except only God Himself. For no one but God can comprehend God. Therefore it is necessary and right that He should give testimony of Himself, as well as of men. Humility in God is His knowledge of His own supreme excellence, and His Will that all should know and praise Him. O Lord, let me know myself and know Thee, despise myself and praise Thee. Amen.

SILENCE AND RECOLLECTION

"In silence and in hope shall your strength be" (Isa. xxx, 15).

BOSSUET says, "It is true to assert that silence well kept is a sure way of salvation, for as a holy writer says: 'If you keep silence you will be saved.'"

Silence may be divided into three kinds, in each of which we may contemplate the example of Jesus.

1. Silence of Rule.

When we find a thing laid down in the Rule of every Religious Order we may be sure that it is very important, if not essential to the religious life. Now all lay great stress on silence. It is intimately connected with humility, says St Benedict. Moreover, since according to St Thomas, humility is reverence for God, if we are filled continually with the thought of God's presence, we shall not speak much.

Three reasons why the rule of silence is so important: (*a*) Because silence prevents many sins and imperfections. "In the multitude of words there shall not want sin; but he that refraineth his lips is most wise" (Prov. x, 19). And, "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity . . . which defileth the whole body" (Jas. iii, 6). (*b*) Because the spirit of prayer cannot live without silence. And (*c*), Because silence promotes unity and charity. Consider how many virtues are necessarily practised in order to observe silence well: recol-

lection of God's presence, obedience, mortification, humility, etc.

Look at the example of Jesus in this first kind of silence. The rule imposed upon Him by His Heavenly Father seems to have been that He should not speak until the time that other babes do, that He should learn to speak from His holy Mother, although He had from the very beginning the full use of reason and the power of speech. What a sermon he could have preached to the shepherds from the manger, or to the wise men! It must have been to Him, so to say, a great act of self-denial to speak no word of love to His Blessed Mother, no word of comfort during the flight into Egypt. It might seem that he would have done great good, but no word did He speak, because of the rule of silence given Him by His Father.

And then, for thirty years, only one public utterance in the Temple. The Eternal Word in silence, in obscurity.

We must examine ourselves as to both exterior and interior silence. The first is prescribed mainly as a safeguard of the second. Interior silence means that instead of speaking to ourselves, we speak to God; instead of thinking idle dreams, to think always of Him, directly or indirectly, i.e., when we think of those things He wishes us to think of.

If our Lord made your convent a visit to see if the rule of silence was being kept, what would He find? Two talking together here, three there, two somewhere else, when perhaps they ought all to be at work, or prayer, or some other community exercise? If He presented Himself suddenly before you, as to the disciples going to

Emmaus, and asked, " What are these discourses that you hold one with another ? " what would you answer ? Could you say, "'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth:' we are speaking of holy things; of how to advance in virtue, etc ? " Generally you would have to say, " We were talking of our neighbour's faults, of our superiors, of our troubles and discontent."

2. Silence of prudence and charity in conversation.

This is much harder than the other, but most necessary in religious life.

Here, too, we have the example of Jesus Christ. Even His enemies were obliged to cry out in wonder, " Never did man speak like this man ! " And when they tried to catch Him in His speech they were always confounded, as in the Gospel of St Matthew: " And hearing " the divine prudence of His words, " they wondered, and went their way " (xxii, 22). And in all His words what perfect charity ! He never betrayed even the secret of Judas. His words also were few and short, as if to remind us that " in many words there shall not want sin."

Let us examine ourselves carefully on this point, and remember the words of the *Imitation*: " It is easier to keep silence altogether than not to fall into excess in speaking " (Book 1, ch. 20). But the perfection of silence does not consist precisely in never speaking, but in speaking at right times, and according to Christian and religious charity and prudence. This is where mistakes and faults are oftenest found. Here we need care to avoid real sins. How easy is it to break charity at recreation, in speaking of the

absent, or by hurting the feelings of those present!

What a test of true virtue are the parlour and conversations with those who are living outside. Great harm may be done by imprudent talk about the community, etc.

3. Silence in suffering.

What a sublime example is here set us by our Lord. When accused by false witnesses rising up against Him, " He held His peace and answered nothing " (Mark xiv, 61). When Herod " questioned Him in many words, He answered him nothing " (Luke xxiii, 9). And again, when Pilate " feared " and would fain have released Him, " he said to Jesus: Whence art thou? But Jesus gave Him no answer," though one word would have saved Him from the cross (John xix, 9).

Let us examine ourselves. We are so apt to seek sympathy from creatures. Or, even if pride makes us scorn to complain outwardly, at least we murmur inwardly. Bishop Ullathorne used to say that grumbling was an Englishman's birthright, and if you let him do that he will submit to almost everything. But the Bishop would have allowed that is it more perfect *not* to grumble. *Omni extremitate et vilitate contentus est monachus.*

Oh, dearest Lord, help me to bear my cross in silence with resignation, nay, with joy.

Recollection is a double attention to God and to ourselves, but principally to God. Necessary for all who want to make progress. As we are bound to desire to make progress it is essential for us. Either *directly* or *indirectly* we must always think of God. No spiritual life without it.

1. Without it we cannot "walk before God and be perfect."

2. Without it we cannot avoid a multitude of venial sins in our daily life.

3. Without it the secret voice of God is unheard.

4. Without it temptations surprise and overthrow us.

5. Without it prayer is a time of more distraction than other times.

How am I to acquire recollection?

1. Desire it, and desire it very strongly. No hope of gaining it if you do not strongly and intensely desire it.

2. It cannot be acquired all at once, but only gradually, but we must be always at it.

3. Silence the most necessary condition, interior silence above all.

4. Mortify the natural eagerness to hear news. Newspapers have stopped many a soul from attaining perfection.

5. Visiting the Blessed Sacrament. The silent, hermit life of our Lord in the Tabernacle gives the spirit of recollection.

6. Prayer of aspiration.

7. Bodily mortification, especially custody of the senses, sight, hearing.

8. Minding our own business and not other peoples' is a most essential thing.

9. Father Faber (*Growth in Holiness*) considers that "the *greatest help of all* is to act slowly. Eagerness, anxiety, indeliberation, precipitancy, destroy recollection."

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

THE practice of remembering the presence of God is the safest and most efficacious method of arriving at virtue. Three things are necessary for Christian Perfection.

1. Flight from sin.
2. Practice of virtue.
3. Union with God.

But the thought of God's presence efficaciously promotes these three things.

1. *Flight from sin.* The thought of God's presence leads to this. The light of reason shows it to us, and even heathens have understood it. The Psalmist says: "I have kept Thy commandments and testimonies, because all my ways are in Thy sight" (Ps. cxviii). Assuredly whenever we are tempted to sin, were we to think that God sees us we should never do what grieves Him. "Remember God and thou shalt not sin" (St Ignatius, Martyr).

"Thou shouldst have great watchfulness, for in the sight of the Judge Who sees all, thou livest," says St Bernard.

And St Thomas: "Were we to see the Lord present, seeing and judging all, we should seldom or never sin."

Experience shows the effect of the presence of some man we respect or love; how much more then God's presence, if His Eye was remembered!

2. *Practice of virtue.* How much the thought of the presence of God affects this.

(a) The eyes of a master on a servant, of a general on a soldier, etc.! What then the Eye of the Living God fixed on us?

" I will fix my eyes upon thee." He is also acting with us and giving us strength. How should this thought affect our prayers, actions, etc. Should we not wish to act in the most perfect way?

3. *Union with God is promoted.* The more we think of Him and remember His presence, the more are we moved to love Him and conform ourselves to Him.

The presence of God is (*a*) the source of light by which to see our duties, the virtues we ought to practise, etc. " Walk before me and be perfect."

(*b*) The source of joy and consolation by which the yoke is made sweet and the burden is rendered light.

God is present by His essence or immensity, by His power, by His presence: all know this, but how many draw the right inferences from it?

God is everywhere by essence, therefore the sinner offends Him in His very bosom. To break laws anywhere is a crime, but in the very presence of the king it is insolent.

God is everywhere by power, therefore we misuse His very power to offend Him.

God is everywhere by presence; He sees all, therefore we always have a witness and Judge, whom we cannot escape. " Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart."

" I know Thou canst do all things and no thought is hid from Thee " (Job xliv, 2). " Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me: It is high

and I cannot reach it" (Ps. cxxxviii, 6). "In every place the eyes of the Lord consider the good and wicked. All the ways of a man are open to His eyes" (Prov. xvi, 2). "Darkness compasseth me about, and the walls cover me: and no man seeth me: whom do I fear? The Most High will not remember my sins. And he understandeth not that His eye seeth all things; for such a man's fear driveth from him the fear of God and the eyes of men fearing Him. And he knoweth not that the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts. For all things were known to the Lord God, before they were created; and so after they were perfected, He beholdeth all things" (Ecclus xxiii, 26, 27, 28). "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Juda is exceeding great . . . for they have said The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not" (Ezech. ix, 9).

PRAYER*

I

PRAYER IN GENERAL

THE whole spiritual life consists essentially in two grand duties, both of which, but especially the first, must be constant and unintermitting—Prayer and Mortification.

These are the two wings by which we are to fly to Heaven, and without both progress is impossible. Of these two, the first is now to be treated of and examined. Prayer is the most noble and divine instrument of perfection or union with God, and by prayer alone can we attain to the end of our Creation and Redemption—union of spirit with God, our Creator and Redeemer.

The prayer chiefly to be discussed at present is that known as Affective Prayer, by which our souls offer and give and consecrate themselves and all they have and all they owe to God, giving Him all love, obedience, submission, thanksgiving, etc.

WHAT IS PRAYER

PRAYER is defined to be "an elevation of the mind to God," and by lifting or elevating the mind we mean making acts by which the soul moves, and expresses, or at least implies:

1. An entire dependence on Him as the Author and Fountain of all good.

* The substance of this paper is evidently drawn from the teaching of Father Augustin Baker, in his famous treatise *Sancta Sophia.*

2. A will and readiness to give Him His due, viz., all love, obedience, adoration, glory and worship, by humbling and annihilating herself and all created things in His Presence.

3. A desire and intention to aspire to union of spirit with Him. These things are included in all real prayer.

Prayer, then, is the most perfect and divine action of which man is capable; *it is the only principal action the soul was created to accomplish,* because the soul was created for union with God, and prayer is the only means to that union. Without prayer no other means is effective. Therefore, of all other duties and good works that can be done, *Prayer is above all indispensably necessary.*

The following considerations, six in number, suffice to prove the *Necessity of Prayer.*

1. By prayer only, through which charity is aroused, strengthened and increased, can we be united to God, In this all good consists. Separated from God we have only ourselves, viz., corruption, nothingness, misery.

2. By prayer only all grace, our only good, is (*a*) obtained, (*b*) preserved, (*c*) recovered if unhappily lost. The reason is because to obtain grace we must have recourse to the Fountain of grace and good; God is that Fountain. But recourse can only be had to Him by prayer.

3. By prayer alone can we make external things holy so as to render them means of uniting us to God. Works of zeal, charity, ordinary actions of daily life can only be made really good and acceptable to God so far as they are vivified by internal prayer.

4. Thus prayer exercises all virtues. How?

Because a good action is only meritorious inasmuch as it is raised and directed to God by an interior motion of the soul, and this interior motion is prayer. To be drawn interiorly to offer up an action to God by charity is therefore an act of prayer.

5. True prayer is incompatible with sin in a way nothing else is or can be. A soul remaining with the will attached to sin may perform all other actions, e.g., fasting, almsgiving, joining in choral offices, keeping silence, visiting the sick, obeying superiors, hearing or saying Mass, etc., but true prayer of the spirit and an affection to sin are absolutely incompatible and mutually destructive. The reason of this is that internal prayer is the converting and uniting of the will to God; sin is averting and separating the will from God. The two, therefore, being contradictory, cannot dwell together, but one must destroy the other.

6. Prayer is the one sovereign remedy and comfort in all kinds of miseries, whether of soul, as afflictions, guilt, remorse, fear, etc.; or of body, as pain, poverty, death, etc. Because the only remedy and comfort for these ills is to rise above them, but this can only be done by union of spirit with God, a union brought about by pure prayer.

Three consequences follow from these truths. 1. Regarding God; 2, regarding the devil; 3, ourselves.

1. God gives us special commands about prayer in a way He does about no other duty except charity, which is the object of prayer. We are commanded always to pray as the one necessary

thing. "We ought always to pray and not to faint" (Luke xviii, 1).

2. The devil desiring our destruction directs all his efforts to make us undervalue prayer, to disgust us with it, to persuade us it is useless; too difficult, impossible, unnecessary—for if he can extinguish prayer, he can separate us from God; or rather by just so much as he can induce us to neglect and abandon internal prayer, by so much he does actually separate us from God.

3. We ourselves must see that prayer is the one thing that at all times and under all circumstances we must always cultivate, energetically pursue, determinately persevere in, because all our hope, all our good is found in prayer alone. We ought to have one aim and business in life, viz., to exercise and increase charity by internal prayer; or in other words to increase within ourselves the quiet but firm determination to please God and to be united in one spirit with God by constantly, and with ever increasing earnestness, raising our spirits to Him; will to will, mind to mind, heart to heart.

Prayer has been described by Father Baker as "an affectuous actuation of an intellective soul to God."

From this two consequences follow:

1. Prayer of words only is not prayer. Prayer requires an inward attention and affection of soul, though by no means necessarily to the sense of the words uttered. In other words vocal prayer that is not also mental, is no prayer.

2. This most important consequence follows, that *thinking*, exercising the mind, reasoning, discoursing to oneself about a sacred truth, or meditation on a subject *is not itself prayer* but only

a *preparation for prayer, an incitement to pray,* for prayer is only immediately exercised by the will or affections adhering to and being united to God.

There is, then, no such thing as *merely* vocal prayer, so that no one must be misled into this error by the division of prayer into vocal and mental. Merely vocal prayer is that pretence of prayer of which God says, " This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they honour Me."

But the distinction has a right meaning, for though all prayer must be mental to be prayer at all, some prayer is vocal also, some merely mental without any form of words or sound of words, and, further than this, prayer may be made with blind elevation of the will to God without any express internal words or definite thoughts.

II

VOCAL PRAYER

SOMETIMES vocal prayer can be an instrument conducting a soul to contemplation.

In ancient times many arrived at contemplation by means of vocal prayer, joining to it (1) extreme abstraction and solitude, (2) rigorous abstinence, (3) immense diligence in prayer.

But we, not having these conditions, must supply them by daily set exercises of mental recollection, to bring about habitual recollectedness.

If God calls a soul to contemplation through vocal prayer, she must—

1. Practise still greater abstraction and mor-

tification than is necessary by the road of mental prayer. Because vocal prayer is not so profound and inward, and does not give such light for regulating the affections.

2. Spend more time in it, for its efficacy is less.

3. If God draws her to internal prayer of aspirations, be ready to follow at once.

4. If a soul should be drawn (it is most uncommon), by the way of vocal prayer only, it is a secure way, less open to illusions, and less likely to hurt the head, etc.

But as this is a way nowadays almost unknown, mental prayer is necessary. Souls, therefore, must not be tempted to abandon mental prayer for vocal prayer, even if vocal prayer were " clear and undistracted," and the mental recollections " painful and disturbed." Persevere and this will change. Little less than a miracle will make the vocal prayer of imperfect souls to become contemplation. Sudden apparent contemplation, then, must be vehemently suspected.

In the beginning of a spiritual course vocal prayer is good:

1. For those who cannot manage discursive prayer.

2. For others, if it raise and better their attention to God, provided it yield to internal prayer when they are disposed for it. Vocal prayer of obligation, public or private, must always be attended to.

Three kinds of attention.

Some kind of attention is necessary for all prayer.

1. Attention of mind to the sense of the words uttered, varying with each verse, etc. This is

the lowest kind and the more imperfect the soul is the easier it is.

2. To come to vocal prayer, viz., the Divine office, with some efficacious affection of soul to God, or letting the vocal prayer raise the heart, and remaining in it with as deep recollection as possible, without reference to the changing sense. This is far more perfect, being attention to God and union of affection with Him, which is the object of all prayer. No one should quit this for the first attention.

3. Certain souls in close union with God are able to be profoundly recollected and united to God, and yet to follow the sense without injuring, nay, increasing and simplifying their internal union. This is not before the soul has arrived at contemplation and habitual close union. This is by far the most perfect and uncommon.

III

INTERNAL AFFECTIVE PRAYER

MENTAL or Internal Prayer is either

1. Imperfect and acquired; or
2. Perfect and infused.

The perfect and infused prayer is contemplation, the imperfect, acquired and active is the preparation for contemplation, which is the end and object of all spiritual exercises.

Necessity of Internal and Affective Prayer, which is the only efficacious instrument of perfect union of spirit with God, i.e., of contemplation.

Cardinal Bellarmine (*in Ser fer 2, Rogat*) says, " This, I believe, I may most truly and confidently affirm, that without a diligent pursuit of internal

prayer none will ever become truly spiritual, nor attain to any degree of perfection. Many go often to the Sacraments, and yet remain as imperfect as before. Nay, many religious and priests read Scripture, receive and celebrate often, perhaps daily, and yet are devoid of devotion and the Spirit of God, cold in love, earnest in love of vanities, full of impatience, envy and inordinate desires. Why? Because they never seriously enter into their own hearts by exercises of introversion and true internal prayer."

The same may be said of some religious who ought to be more contemplative, who, by profession, ought to aspire to contemplation, but who mistake the way. For they imagine, or act as if they imagined, that they can reach union by exact performance of outward observances, solemn offices, etc., joined to internal discursive prayer. These things are good as inferior and imperfect preparations to true prayer. But if religious rest in them, in external observance and meditation, or discursive prayer, little interior reformation or simplification of soul will result. For these active exercises shortly lose all power, if the soul does not go on from them to truly enlightening exercises of internal affective prayer. This prayer is a prayer of the heart and will, quietly and calmly produced, but by good affections, not by the understanding.

Internal affective prayer excels vocal and discursively mental prayer in many ways.

1. Because by it alone is our union in spirit with God perfectly obtained; because by it the will, with all the powers and affections of the soul, is fixed on God.

2. Because by it the soul enters far more deeply into God, and is far more enlightened by Him, the Fountain of Light. She thus detects her imperfections, impurities of intention, and inordinate affections.

3. Because grace and strength to practise all we see to be God's Will is obtained principally by this kind of prayer.

(*a*) By way of impetration, according to God's promises.

(*b*) By the direct efficacy of this prayer itself. For, rightly understood, this prayer includes the habits of all the virtues. Why? Because first the virtue and merit of all external things comes from the interior soul exercising herself in charity and purity of intention, and this is done by internal affective prayer: further, all internal exercise of virtue is, and becomes direct prayer of the spirit, e.g., internal humility is the soul seeing its nothingness, and adhering to God, its only good. Thus, as habits are formed by repeated acts, so constant internal affection will form the habits of all virtues.

4. To persevere in this prayer is universal mortification of a profound and perfect kind. For the will forces nature and the inferior powers to leave whatever pleases them, and give the affections to God, whatever disgust they may feel in this exercise. St John Chrysostom says, " It is impossible that whoever with due care and diligence prays can ever sin."

5. Because this internal affective prayer is the only exercise that cannot lack purity of intention. Fasting, obediences, choir, etc., may come from impulse of nature. In fact, then, all virtue comes

from internal affective prayer, that is, the will being fixed on God by charity. Now if any oblique or selfish intention should intrude itself into prayer of the will, it would be observed, and unless expelled, no progress could be made in that prayer.

6. Because internal affective prayer is what makes all other things to be prayer at all. For without it vocal prayer is mere sound, and meditation a mere intellectual exercise. God desires our wills, affections, hearts, and without them neither our tongues nor our brains are of any value in His sight. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, etc." "Son, give me thy heart." "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." The only profitable attention to prayer is that of the heart, taking the heart as the seat of love. The attention of the mind only is nothing, otherwise study of holy things would be prayer.

Attention cannot be wanting to internal affective prayer, for the attention itself is the very prayer. As soon as the mind wanders prayer ceases.

Considering these six excellences of internal affective prayer, two things follow:

1. A right minded soul of good will must see that no exertion should be spared to acquire so invaluable a treasure.

2. Religious superiors must acknowledge that nothing can more essentially belong to their office than to see that their subjects are thoroughly well instructed in it, and habituated to its use. St Bernard says: "Let beginners be taught to pray spiritually, and to withdraw as far as may be from all bodies and bodily images when they think of God."

So also Abbot Nilus, a disciple of St John Chrysos-

tom, says: "Happy is the soul who, when she prays, empties herself entirely of all images and forms; happy is the soul that prays fervently and without distractions; such a soul increases daily in the love and desire of God; happy is the soul who, when praying, altogether quits the use and exercise of her senses, and loses interest in all things but God."

But much struggle and long endeavour is necessary to attain to this purity of prayer, to overcome the obstacles from the world, self, and the devil, of whom Abbot Nilus says: "The whole war between us and the demons is about nothing else than prayer."

FRUITS OF AFFECTIVE PRAYER

Many and various are the effects of affective prayer in the soul.

1. GREAT love of God, showing itself in many acts of the love of preference, complacence and benevolence.

(*a*) The love of preference is that by which we prefer God above all things. "What have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God who is my portion for ever" (Ps. lxxii, 25, 26).

(*b*) The love of complacence, by which we rejoice that God is what He is.

(*c*) The love of benevolence; wishing all good to God. And as God is wanting in nothing, we can make acts of the love of benevolence,

(1) By desiring Him to be loved by all.

(2) By desiring all good in an infinite degree for Him, even if He had it not already.

But desires must be accompanied by deeds; love must be effective as well as affective.

(*a*) Love of preference. If I would prefer God to all I must not offend Him to please a friend, I must not despise His Will to do my own.

(*b*) If I possess the love of complacency I shall devote myself to Him.

(*c*) If I desire good to Him, and rejoice by the love of benevolence that He is so great, I shall work for Him and try to promote His glory.

2. A true desire to do the will of God in all

things. " But yet not my will, but Thine be done " (Luke xxii, 42). This makes us consult, not our own lights and inclinations, but God's Will; act from a motive of pleasing God, not self.

But how are we to know God's Will?

It is expressed by the law of God, by the Church, of the Order, or of Superiors. In matters neither commended nor forbidden, we must consider what is best in itself for us. If we doubt, then, in matters of importance, seek light; in matters of small importance, avoid two extremes; one extreme is to take no pains to think which would please God more, the other to be too long doubting. Enter into yourself and consult God, and then decide at once. We do not weigh the lesser coins, neither should we waste time in weighing small actions that present themselves to be done. We should not serve a master well if we took as much pains and time in considering what we were to do, as in doing what was necessary.

3. Burning zeal for God's glory. This desire must show itself in acts as in St Dominic, St Vincent Ferrer, St Teresa, who vowed always to do the better or more perfect thing.

4. Great desire of Holy Communion. St Catherine of Siena burned with this desire, and Blessed Imelda also.

5. Great desire to bear in body and soul the mortification of Jesus Christ. Directors have to keep souls in prayer of affection back rather than urge them forward. Exterior and interior advantage. Mortification of life and not mere external religion.

6. A true and practical desire to be united with God, for His sake and because He wills it. This

desire, in order to be true, and not an illusion, must be practical, by taking the means of union, dying to self in order to live to God.

"As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. When shall I come and appear before the Face of God" (Ps. xli, 1, 2).

But the hart runs actually towards the water.

THE TRUE IDEA OF PRAYER

"Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight; the lifting up of my hands as evening sacrifice" (Ps. cxl, 2).

It is very necessary for all to know what prayer really is, so that they may understand how good it is, how easy and how joyful a thing it is.

Prayer is lifting up the mind to God by thinking of Him, and the will by desiring Him, praising Him, asking Him for what we need. Prayer is not repeating forms of words, without thinking of God or asking Him for anything.

How many if asked, "What did you ask God for in your morning or evening prayers to-day"? would have to answer: "I did not ask for anything, I only said my prayers." That is, "I recited a form."

We lift up the soul to God,

1. To adore Him (Dan. vi, 10, and xiv, 24).
2. To praise Him (Ps. ix).
3. To thank Him (Ps. cxlviii).
4. To ask Him for favours, through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Prayer of direct petition and of insinuation.

(*a*) Direct petition, as, "Give me understanding." "Give us this day our daily bread," etc; also asking through some reason which the prayer brings forward, as,

"Through the Blood of Jesus Christ."

"Through His Nativity and Passion," etc.

"Now we beseech" (God) "when we remind

Him of His holiness, as when we say: Through Thy birth deliver us, O Lord" (St Thomas, 2^a, 2^a, *Qu.* 83, *Art.* 17).

(*b*) *Prayer not of direct petition but of insinuation,* hinting an indirect petition, by declaring the want, and thus indirectly asking. This indirect petition is prayer. It lays open the want, and implies the desire of help, and is often better and more powerful than direct petition, being more humble, modest, reverent and confident (St Thomas 2, 2, *Qu.* 83, *Art.* 17).

Examples:

Our Lady at Cana: " They have no wine."

Mary and Martha: " He whom Thou lovest is sick."

As Jesus loved Lazarus, it was enough to relate the fact, to express the need. In this short prayer are many excellences. We see in it:

1. Firm faith and trustfulness that Christ could cure if He pleased, and would if He saw well.

2. High degree of love: "Thou lovest him and us, and we Thee; as Thou lovest us, it is only necessary to say, 'He whom Thou lovest is sick.'" Love outweighs all other prayers.

(*c*) *Resignation*: It leaves all to Him.

Sometimes direct petitions do not please God; we know not what we ask. The petition of the mother of James and John was indiscreet, and not pleasing to our Lord.

Also the petition of Moses in Deut. iii, 23–26, to which God answered: " Speak no more to Me of this matter," but indirect prayer, trustful, loving, resigned, is always pleasing to Him. "Lord, I am not humble, Lord I have no patience," etc.

In the Collect of the Mass of Trinity Sunday St Thomas finds:

(*a*) Adoration.

(*b*) Thanksgiving.

(*c*) Simple petition, and

(*d*) Petition through some sacred fact or mystery (see 2, 2, Qu. 83, Art. 17).

St Thomas in his introduction to his commentary on the Psalms writes: " Prayer means the lifting up of the mind to God, or rather into God. Now in four ways can we lift up the soul into God.

1. By admiring and wondering at the height of His almighty power. We see an instance in Isa. xl, 26: " Lift up your eyes on high and see who hath created these things: who bringeth out their host by number, and calleth them all by their names: by the greatness of His might and strength and power, not one of them was missing "; and Psalm ciii, 24, " How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom; the earth is filled with Thy riches." This is the lifting up by faith. *Elevatio fidei.*

2. " The mind is lifted up so as to tend towards the excellence of eternal happiness." This is the *Elevatio spei,* the rising to God by hope (see Job xi, 15–18).

3. The mind is lifted up to God by cleaving to the thought of His goodness and holiness. This is the *Elevatio caritatis,* the lifting up of the soul by love. (Isa. li, 6, 7).

4. The mind is lifted up to imitate the Divine righteousness in work. This is *Elevatio justitiæ,* lifting the soul to God's righteousness.

" Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord in the heavens " (Lam. iii, 41).

OUGHT WE TO PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION

CAN we for a moment hesitate about it since Holy Church directs us to ask God " that we may ever rejoice in the consolation of the Holy Ghost "—*da nobis de ejus semper consolatione gaudere.*

What are we without the spiritual comfort and consolation of the Holy Ghost? We are very much what a garden would be without rain and sunshine; with good soil, but nothing above except cloud and mist.

What fruits could be expected? No rain for the roots, no sunshine to bring forth and ripen the fruits.

Without divine favours, without some spiritual consolations, even if they do not overflow into the senses, shall we have courage to do anything great for God? St Teresa writes (*Life*, ch, 10), " We are so miserable, and so much inclined to things of the earth, that we shall be ill able to abhor in very truth and with great detachment all things here below, unless we see that we have some pledge from above: since it is with these gifts that the Lord bestows on us the strength which we have lost by our sins. It will be a hard matter, too, for us to desire to be held in abhorrence and displeasure by all, as well as to aim at all the other great virtues which the perfect possess, if we have not some pledge of the love which God bears us, and with it a lively faith, for we are by nature so dead, that we follow after what we see before us,

and hence these very favours are the means of arousing our faith and of strengthening it."

Then the humility of the Saint makes her add: "Perhaps, indeed, it is I who am so vile that am judging of others by myself; there may be persons who need no more than the truth of the faith in order to do works of great perfection, whereas I, as I am so miserable, have had need of everything."

If St Teresa needed spiritual consolation to do great things, how much more do I need them, in some degree, to do even small things for God!

Grant then, O God, that I may always "rejoice in Thy consolation," to cheer me on in the way of humiliation, self-denial, and prayer.

"HIS OWN"

Before making the meditation, read slowly and attentively John i, 1-19.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John, i, 11).

"He" is the second Person of the holy and adorable Trinity, God the Son, of whom St John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God (to show He was a distinct Person) and the Word was God" (to show His equality with the Father). "All things were made by Him (therefore you) and without Him was made nothing that was made."

I, O Lord, true God, am Thine, because Thou didst make me. Thou art life. To me Thou hast given life—life of body, life of soul, and from Thee I hope for everlasting life.

"He came unto His own." I am His own. In how many ways?

1. Because He made me (John i, 3).
2. Because He redeemed me (1 Cor. vi, 20).
3. Because my soul is His temple (1 Cor. vi, 19).
4. Because I have been given to Him by His Father as the fruit and reward of His Passion. "Thine they were, and to me Thou hast given them" (John xvii, 6).
5. Because He has in His gracious loving kindness allowed me to give, dedicate and consecrate myself to Him. So can I truly say to Thee, O Lord:

" I am Thine, O save Thou me;
For I have sought Thy Will making me holy " (Ps. cxviii, 94).

O Lord, I am Thine own. I adore Thee. I thank Thee for making me Thine own, Thy very own. I hate all that stands between me and Thee. I love Thee, but not as I ought, make me love Thee more and more.

Give me grace ever to remain Thine own; to belong to Thee in darkness and in light, in life and in death, in this world and the next. Pardon me all my sins. Bestow on me Thy holy love. Grant me to die in Thy love.

" His own received Him not " (John i, 11).

1. All men were His own, because made by Him. " Know ye that the Lord He is God: He made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture " (Ps. xcix, 3). How few men received Him. " His own received Him not."

2. The Jews were in a special manner " His own," and yet they received Him not, by believing and honouring Him. He Himself complained of this: " I am come in the name of My Father, and you receive me not " (John v, 43). " I honour my Father, and you have dishonoured me " (John viii, 49).

Think of the ways in which the Jews could be called His own, and then judge how grievous was their rejection.

(*a*) He had chosen them among all people to be His own. " The Lord hath chosen thee this day to be His peculiar people " (Deut xxvi, 18).

(*b*) His own, being His kinsmen in the flesh: He springing from their nation, " of whom is Christ according to the flesh " (Rom. ix, 5).

(*c*) His own, to whom He had given so much: "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me" (Isa. i, 2).

But though in so many ways His own, they did not receive Him. They turned from Him and rejected Him. Think what you would feel if you came to your own house, your own family, your own convent, and were not received, if the door were shut in your face, and they said: "We know you not."

You also are His own. Will you also refuse to receive Him? Listen to His pathetic voice as He knocks at the door of your soul. He, who is Love, desires to enter, and kindle His fire within you. He who is light, desires to enter and enlighten you. "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled; for My head is full of dew, and my locks of the drops of the night" (Cant. v, 2).

He calls you by loving names. "Sister" because He has taken human nature and become like us. "Love" because He hath espoused us in love. "My dove," because as doves build in the crevices of a rock, so you in His wounds. "Undefiled," because He desires to see you so, and by His word to make you clean (John xv, 3). He has wandered afar in the dark night of this world Men's hearts are too full of the desires of this world, and of self love to open to Him. Open to Him by faith. He has opened to you the gate of heaven—to you and to all who believe. When He has entered, entertain Him by confidence and love. "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent me" (John iv, 34); so you see the only food He cares for is the mystical feast of love. Offer Him your good will, always to do His will, and

what is the same, the Will of His Father, who sent Him. " The Spirit and the bride say come; and he that heareth let Him say come. And he that thirsteth (for God) let him come, and he that will, let him take the water of life freely. Come, Lord Jesus " (Apoc. xxii, 17).

UNION WITH GOD

"The word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John i, 14).

WHEN St John says, "That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world: He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not," he shews us the necessity of the coming of God the Son visibly in the flesh. This necessity arose from the absence of the knowledge of God in the world. Though He had always been in the world, yet the world knew Him not. How few before Christ's coming knew Him, and were guided by His light. Though He was in the world, the world knew Him not. The defect of knowledge was the fault of man, not from the want of light, for the light of God was able to enlighten every man coming into this world. Not only was He light, but the true light. To understand this aright we must reflect upon the meaning of the word *true*. The true light is opposed to light that is false, or only a figure, or only a reflection of another light. There was intellectual light in the world before Christ came, but much of it was false (cf. Rom. i, 21, and Jer. x, 14). There was much light among the Jews, who gloried in the law and the Scripture, but this was in figure: much among the holy men of old, but this light was partial and reflected, like that of the moon. Jesus Christ was the true light. This was what man needed: the true light that enlighteneth every one coming into this world.

What was the object God had in view in the Incarnation of His Son, when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"? God's object was to redeem us, to buy us back by a great price from the slavery of the devil, and to unite us once more to God.

By Adam's sin we were separated from God. The Incarnation of God the Son was the unspeakably gracious way God provided to bring our souls back into union and friendship with Him.

Before the coming of Christ how few knew God. Although they ought to have known the invisible Creator, from the visible things around that spoke of their hidden cause, how few walked before Him and became perfect, and how few strove to unite themselves to Him. The light was in the world, but men could not see it. The light shone in the darkness, but the darkness did not comprehend it.

So the "Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"; that by His light we might see the way and walk along it in truth and righteousness, till we arrive at life everlasting. This was the great end of the coming of God the Son in our flesh, that we may be united to God; for "He who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit" (1 Cor, vi, 17).

We have all heard a thousand times that union with God is the end and object of the spiritual life. We know that we came into religion to be united to God, to be joined to the Lord.

What is meant by union with God? Often as we have heard the phrase, does it bring any definite idea to our minds?

WHAT IT IS NOT

In the first place it is evident that it cannot mean that we should become one person with God. That would be an absurdity and a heresy, for we are God's creatures, and God Himself, even by His infinite power, could not make us God, or change us into God.

Nor does this union mean that we are to be so absorbed into God as to lose our own identity. On earth, through all our mortal life, in heaven, for all eternity, we shall be ourselves, human persons, finite creatures of God. " Deep calleth on deep " (Ps. xli. 8), the deep of my own nothingness, will be for ever distinct from the deep of God's infinite greatness, and will ever call on Him. To imagine that we can be so absorbed into God as to lose our own personal identity as His creatures, is the error called pantheism.

WHAT IT IS

We can form a better idea of what union with God means if we consider what union in a family or a community of any kind means. When we speak of a united community we mean that the various members that compose it, though very different in many ways, each with their own characters, gifts, virtues, faults, yet still have the same opinions, aims and desires. They have all come to the community for the same end and object, so they are united in mind and in will. " And the multitude of the believers had one heart and one soul " (Acts iv, 32). In like manner, though we must remain ourselves, and therefore be infinitely different from God, we can by His grace

and help become really united to Him in mind and in will.

We must be always infinitely different from God because we are His creatures and He is our Creator. He is of Himself, we are nothing. He is light, we are darkness. He is holy, we are sinful and capable of all sin. He is wisdom, we are ignorant and foolish. He is power, we are weakness. He is in Himself goodness, we are of ourselves emptiness and are filled with goodness by Him.

UNION IN MIND

But, in spite of this infinite and eternal difference, we can become joined to Him so as to be one spirit with Him. Our minds can become one with His infinite mind, by having the same thoughts that He has and looking at things in His way. God is truth, therefore, as far as our minds are enlightened by truth, they become one with God. In the supernatural order, God makes His thoughts known to us by revelation. The revealed truths are, according to our human language, some of those divine thoughts, of which God Himself has said, " My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways, for as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts " (Isa. lv, 8, 9). By our own efforts we could never attain to a knowledge of God's thoughts, but by that supernatural gift which we call faith, some of those thoughts are revealed or made known to us. Faith, then, unites our mind to the infinite mind of God. We have God's thoughts instead of ours. By this light we

know light and our darkness is illuminated. " The Lord is my light " (Ps. xxvi, 1). " I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life " (John, viii, 12; see also John, xii, 35, 36).

This, then, is the first way in which we are to become one with God. We are to have one mind with Him, to be united to Him by having His thoughts made known to us by His light. The more our faith grows, the more do we become one with Him in mind. As the whole end and object of the spiritual life is union with God, it follows that we ought to reflect continually on the truths of faith, to contemplate what God has made known to us about Himself, and to beg Him to increase our faith, saying with the Apostles, " Lord, increase our faith " (Luke, xvii, 5).

O Lord, light of the world, enlighten me. Without Thee, the light which enlighteneth every one that cometh into this world, I am darkness. Give me grace to be one with Thee in mind by the light of faith. O truth, my God, make me one with Thee in everlasting charity. Lord, increase my faith. Let Thy mind, O Lord Jesus Christ, be in me that I may be united to Thee.

UNION IN WILL

In the second place this all-desirable union with God, which is our perfection and our happiness, is brought about by union of will. In the holy and undivided Trinity there is only one will. This is the will of the one nature and is the will of the Three Persons. They have one will because they are one God. We cannot distinguish between

God and His will. The will of God is God. Therefore, if we are united to God's will, we are united to God, and if we are separated from and opposed to God's will we are separated from God, opposed to God.

It is evident that the union of our wills with the all holy, all wise and all powerful will of God must take place by our conforming our finite and imperfect wills to His sovereign and infinite will. Could we dare to ask Him to conform His will to ours? This would indeed be the height of presumption. In order to join ourselves to God, then, we must be determined to love His will more than ours; to seek His will instead of our own, and to reject and detest our own will, that we may in all things embrace and desire His most holy will, because it is His will, and, as far as we can, in the way that He wills.

This is true union with God, and without it there can be no union. Thus he who is joined to the will of God becomes one spirit with Him, and to effect this union of will is the whole object of the spiritual life.

Mortification, that is, self-denial, is necessary in order to reject and to put to death our own will, and to take the holy will of God instead. Self-will is put to death that the will of God, which is life, may live in us.

Prayer, which is the lifting up of the mind and will to God, is necessary in order to unite our minds with His mind, our wills with His will. This is union with Him, and in this union all spiritual life consists.

Thus we see, what it is most important to understand, that true union with God, union so

perfect that it would carry the soul straight from the death-bed to God, may be brought about without any gift of contemplation, either ordinary or miraculous. Contemplation is union with God, but it is not necessary for union. Most perfect union can take place without it. St Alphonsus Liguori, in his work for religious, *The True Spouse of Christ*, page 141, says, " Some religious express a desire for this supernatural and passive union: I would rather have them desire the active union, that is, perfect conformity with the will of God in which, as St Teresa teaches, the true union of the soul with God consists."

This sentence of the holy doctor is a very important one to understand and to remember. It clears away many difficulties and prevents much discouragement. It shows us clearly what to aim at and what is meant by " union with God." St Alphonsus says that sometimes religious express a desire for supernatural and passive union with God. Now, in one sense, all union with God must be supernatural, that is, it must be the effect of His grace and cannot be brought about merely by our natural powers. But in this passage the holy doctor means by the word " supernatural " an unusual visitation of God to the soul, and he points out that this is not necessary for true and intimate union with God.

This visitation of God to the soul, even when not miraculous in the order of grace, but within the limits of the ordinary laws of His providence in dealing with faithful souls, is entirely gratuitous, a free gift of God's goodness. It is called the gift of contemplation.

The phrase, " passive union," means that the

state of contemplation is God's action on the soul, and not the result of the soul's action. However perfect a soul may be, however faithful to grace, it cannot bring about this state of contemplation. It must always be the free gift of God. The soul is passive, that is, acted on by God. In baptism a child is passive. It receives the grace of regeneration as a passive object of God's mercy. The active union with God, which is complete conformity, or oneness, that is, union with God's will, is the result of the soul's action, though, of course, moved by God's grace, " without which we can do nothing " (John, xv, 5). In this wider sense it is supernatural, but not in the sense of extraordinary, and needing an unusual or even miraculous gift. St Alphonsus teaches that the " active union with God," which is a true and perfect union, consists in conformity with God's will. If the conformity is imperfect, the union is imperfect; if the conformity of the soul is perfect, the union is perfect, and the soul going out of this world in that perfect conformity will go straight into heaven, that is, into eternal union with God. In this conformity with God's will, according to St Teresa, St Alphonsus and all the spiritual teachers, " the true union with God consists." This does not imply that " supernatural and passive union " is not true, but that without it we can have true, genuine and perfect union with God. By active union of our wills with the will of God, we are so " joined to the Lord " as to become " one spirit " with Him (1 Cor. vi, 17).

An illustration may explain this more clearly. It has been said that the gift of contemplation, whether ordinary, that is, within the limits of

God's ordinary dealings with faithful souls, without miraculous action, or extraordinary, that is implying miraculous action, is true union with God, but not necessary for union.

By way of illustration, take the case of three men, all one hundred miles from London and all on their way there. London is the end at which all three are aiming. We will suppose one to be carried to London in a moment by an angel (Dan. xiv, 35). The second goes by an express train, while the third has no other way than to walk there. All three equally attain their end; but the first by miraculous power, the second by a wonderful though ordinary method, the third by a slow and laborious process. The first may be likened to a soul carried to God by the gift of extraordinary contemplation, the second by the gift of ordinary contemplation, the third we may liken to the state of most souls, who gain union with God by the humble and laborious process of daily mortification and prayer. Just as the three men in the end are equally in London, so the union with God, without any gift of contemplation, may be true and complete by union with His will.

Nothing can be more important than to have clear ideas on this point. It shows us what to aim at. It prevents us from " running as at an uncertainty," and from merely " beating the air " in our spiritual combat. This principle shows us that union with God is to be brought about by seeking to carry out His will in all the actions of our ordinary daily life.

It proves to us, also, that " holiness, without which we cannot see God," is within the reach of all without exception, for all can seek to do His

will and to love " the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God " (Rom. xii, 2).

What is meant by the phrase, " the mystical union with God "? The word mystical means hidden, and therefore " mystical union " means a union hidden in the depths of our own soul, where we find God. St Paul says to all who are united to God by the grace of Christ, " your life is hid with Christ in God " (Col. iii, 3). As Jesus Christ is now hidden from our eyes, all union with Him, and through Him with God, must be a mystical union hidden from the eyes of men, and even in great measure from ourselves.

In heaven, when we shall no longer see God as now by faith, " as through a glass in a dark manner," but by the light of glory " face to face "; when we shall know Him " not in part, but even as we are known " (1 Cor. xiii, 12), this union with God will be complete, perfect and eternal. Then our Lord's prayer for us will be fulfilled, " That they may be all one, as Thou Father in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us " (John, xvii, 21).

"HE HATH CARE OF YOU"

"Cast all your care on God, for He hath care of you" (1 Peter, v, 7).

To cast all care on God is to give ourselves up to His guidance in all things, the smallest as well as the greatest, without reserve, and with perfect trust and joyful abandonment.

The source of this happy abandonment to God is found in the combined action of faith, hope and charity, with generosity and childlike simplicity. It is the spirit our Lord taught us by putting a child in the midst and saying, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The foundation on which it rests is the truth that nothing, however small, happens without God's knowledge and will, either of good pleasure or of permission. God allows and wills all with a view to our holiness. Whatever He wills for us contains a grace of sanctification and will advance us, for it is God, and God only, who sanctifies us; we can only remove obstacles and co-operate by letting God act as He will (Rom. viii, 28).

This is the excellence of love, the perfection of true hope and confidence, and the perfect exercise of faith.

St Francis de Sales says of it: "Our will cannot die any more than our mind can, but it sometimes goes beyond the limits of ordinary life, in order to live utterly and entirely in the will of God. It then neither wills nor desires anything, but casts itself absolutely on the good pleasure of God, and is so

thoroughly imbued and penetrated with His will that it seems to have no separate existence, but to be hidden with Christ in God. ' I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me ' " (Gal. ii, 20).

God loves with a singular love those who thus abandon themselves to Him. St Francis de Sales carried this out into practice in the most perfect manner. " Our Lord," he says, " taught me this lesson in my youth, and if my whole life were to come over again, I would let myself be ruled by His loving Providence even in the least things, with the simplicity of a child and with deep contempt for all human wisdom." One day he was crossing the lake of Geneva in a frail boat and felt an unspeakable delight in feeling his life so utterly in God's hands.

1. To enable us to cast all our care on Him we must begin to love Him truly, heartily and only.

2. We must often reflect on the knowledge, wisdom, power and love of God our Father, on which our trust is to be founded.

3. We must truly and in fact give ourselves to Him, to be done with as He pleases, remembering we belong to Him as His property and possession. " You are not your own " (1 Cor. vi, 19).

If I belong to God I no longer am or can be my own. Most people who desire to belong to God wish to be their own also. What was my own is no longer so if I belong to God, if the tree and its fruit are His.

4. We must renew constantly the act by which we have given all to God that it may become real in little things. We must be willing and glad that God should do as He pleases with us in everything and accept all as a favour from Him.

5. We must try to live a life of faith without attending to the outcries and protests of fallen nature. "As to feelings I do not waste any time over them," said St Francis de Sales. Mother Mary de Sales gives this advice: "Do not go back upon the past, do not speculate on the future, and for the present only keep close to God."

The results and fruits of this happy state are many and admirable:

1. Liberty of spirit. True freedom. "If," says Bossuet, "there is anything capable of setting a soul free, of enlarging and ennobling it, it is this utter abandonment of self to God and to His will."

2. Inward peace. It keeps us in peace in our own souls and with God. It keeps us on the right path, strengthens the weak, cures scruples, calms fears, confirms good will, gives foretaste of heaven. "And my people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest" (Isa. xxxii, 18).

3. Holy joy. For it makes the soul rejoice in God and not in self and therefore it can rejoice always whatever happens.

4. In a certain true sense it makes crosses cease to be crosses, and makes the carrying of the cross a joy and delight.

Thus a holy soul once said: "To make a cross one piece of wood must be put across another, and as my will never crosses the will of God, but runs on the same line with it, I may say that, though I suffer I have no longer any crosses."

5. To be truly the child of God and live in spiritual childhood. This is even more perfect than the love of suffering, for nothing sacrifices nature more utterly than to become truly and peace-

fully as a little child in the hands and in the heart of God. Nothing gives more glory to His love, for He desires to give heaven to little children and to those who are like them.

" And we know that to them that love God all things work together unto good to such as according to His purpose are called to be saints " (Rom. viii, 28).

" Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God: that He may exalt you in the time of visitation: casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you " (1 Pet. v, 6, 7).

"I SLEEP, BUT MY HEART WATCHETH"

"I sleep, but my heart watcheth: the voice of my beloved knocking; open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is full of dew, and my locks of the drops of the night" (Cant. v, 2).

THIS verse is very touching. The bride of the Lord left alone, but not forsaken. He whom her soul loveth, wandering in a cold, dark world, rejected by His own everywhere. Then we have the words of love, with which He asks her at least not to exclude Him, to take Him in. He asks her to be faithful and true, amidst an unfaithful and unloving generation.

"I sleep!" Is that a time to expect a visit from our Lord? "Awake thou that sleepest." "Simon, sleepest thou?"

Saints explain the words in two ways:

(*a*) Not the sleep of sloth and negligence, but the deep calm repose which only intense and perfect love can give. All care thrown on our dear Lord in complete and perfect trust. "I sleep," as far as casting my care on Him is concerned: "but my heart watcheth," because all its affection, power and strength of loving is fixed on Him.

(*b*) "I sleep." My soul has slept through weariness; has been drowsy, careless, setting my affections on things below, not above, but still, though I have forgotten Him, He has not forgotten me. "My heart watcheth." He who is the truer and dearer heart watcheth for me. "I am found of

them that sought me not" (Isa. lxv, 1, and Rom. x, 20).

"It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh." In this she could not be mistaken. "He calleth His own sheep by name." Listen for the voice and follow it. Not only the voice of the King, of the Lord, nor even of the Beloved, but of "my Beloved."

"My head is full of dew, and my locks of the drops of the night."

They will not take Him in. The world rejects Him. He that is love seeks for a loving heart, and finds it not. He that has opened by His death the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers, cannot find a door open for Him to enter. What a chill, dark, comfortless night was His thirty years of life. "I will not leave you comfortless," He says; "Open to Me."

Will any one refuse?

"My love, my dove, my undefiled."

St Bonaventure, preaching to the Poor Clares, says: "O Lord Jesus what dost Thou say? Thou seest them before Thee. Thou knowest the hearts of the children of men—have they not often grieved Thee, gone back from Thee; rebelled and vexed Thy holy Spirit, and dost Thou still so lovingly and so marvellously invite them? What must be Thy words at home—*in patria*, if Thou speakest thus out in the road—*in via*? Wherefore see, handmaidens of Christ, that this love meet with some return. A poor little treasure of love is in each one of your hearts. He will accept the two mites that make one farthing. Is it nothing to be so invited, so allured, so wooed, as if the favour was His to receive, and yours to give? He is

waiting to enter; shall the door be still shut? He is eager for His home; shall it not be swept and garnished? Open to me, My love, My dove, My undefiled."

" My love," for that which He loves in you is all His own. Mine, by how many titles. Mine to keep, comfort, guard, strengthen, purify, direct, to crown.

" My dove." You must be on the sea of this world like the dove that could find no place to alight, and flew back to the ark.

The rock doves abound in the land of Canaan—build in the clefts of the rocks. " O, my dove, thou art in the clefts of the rock." " The Rock is Christ."

" My undefiled." Does he call me thus? He calls you what He desires to see you, and means to make you.

" My love," a most tender word; " My dove," still more so, but what will it be to be called one day " My undefiled "?

" It is the voice of my Beloved."

What is that voice? Any inspiration of grace. Anything that urges us on, that calls us upwards.

And the Voice always says: Open to Me, who have waited so long, who have one of the mansions in my Father's house open for you.

What if you refuse? But that we will not contemplate as possible!

What if you do open entirely to Him? At the end He will say:

" Arise, My love, My fair one and come away " —away from darkness and sin, " from the lions' dens, and from the mountains of the leopards ";

" for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. . . . Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away."

APPENDIX

Examinations of Conscience written for Religious in the time of Retreat by Father Bertrand Wilberforce.

ON POVERTY

1. Do I rejoice in my state, or desire possessions?

2. Have I taken from community, companions, or strangers without leave?

3. Ordered, bought or got without leave? Asked anything from externs without leave, and without informing Superiors?

4. Obtained a general permission in order to have what Superiors did not mean me to have?

5. Used anything as proprietor; made presents, or changed things without leave?

6. Carelessly lost or damaged things?

7. In my particular office given to others less or more, better or worse than the Superior wished?

8. Hidden anything from Superiors, lest they might object to it?

9. Idle in time appointed for work?

10. Unnecessary expenses in my office (or on journeys)?

11. Accepted alms to dispose of according to my own will?

12. Taken without leave, charge of money, or anything for which I might incur debt or responsibility?

13. Contracted any obligation or debt without leave?

14. Presumed leave without necessity?

15. Have I endeavoured to be poor in spirit?

Free from all attachment to things given me for use? Would it be difficult for me to give up anything? books, clothes, room, employment?

16. Have I sought for superfluities and unnecessary comforts?

17. Do I strive to get the best things for my use?

18. Have I ever rejoiced to feel the effect or reality of poverty?

19. Have I been impatient under trifling privations or inconveniences?

20. Sought exceptions from common life?

21. Poverty in illness? Simplicity about medicines, food, attendance, etc.? Religious or selfish spirit?

22. Ashamed of poverty, e.g., in clothes, etc.?

EXAMINATION ON OBEDIENCE

1. Am I practically persuaded that all the perfection of a religious is in obedience, and that all is vain without it?

2. Have I directly resisted commands?

3. Have I tried to escape a charge or order by objections, excuses, entreaties? Withdrawn myself from obedience, under pretext of urgent business?

4. Have I obeyed without delay?

5. If I had to explain difficulties etc., to a Superior, was it with humility and an obedient spirit?

6. Was there eye service (Eph. vi, 6)?

7. Have I tried to fulfil the wishes of superiors where no order has been given?

8. Interpretations according to self-will?

9. Has my obedience been supernatural, i.e., for God—in union with our Lord?

10. Have I shown weariness if told to do what I disliked?

11. Am I really ready to do anything or to go anywhere my Superiors may wish?

12. Have I submitted my judgement?

EXAMINATION ON HUMILITY

1. Have I consented to thoughts of complacency in my good qualities of mind or body?

2. Have I preferred myself to others interiorly, in virtue or talents?

3. Have I spoken of myself in a vain way, or to gain praise?

4. Have I felt annoyed when others were praised? Have I spoken of the defects of others, through jealousy, that I might be preferred?

5. Have I been anxious to know what others say or think of me, and have I shown coldness to those who do not appear to think so well of me as I desire?

6. Have I been annoyed when Superiors were informed of my faults, and have I given way to feelings of aversion for those who made them known?

7. Have I excused myself when blamed, and refused to acknowledge my faults?

8. Have I been overmuch pained at humiliation?

9. Have I been offended when neglected, or not honoured?

10. Have I desired those works which would bring honour or notice, rather than those known to God alone?

11. Have I disputed with obstinacy or been in a habit of doing so?

12. Do I indulge in an air of self-sufficiency and superiority in conversation? Criticism, or contempt for others' opinions? Do I try to monopolise the conversation?

13. Have I patiently borne the defects of others, or am I hard on them, and lax with myself?

14. Have I been despondent and discouraged after faults?

15. Have I done works of supererogation, rather than common ones, from love of distinction, vanity, self love?

16. Have I any singularities in eating, acting, speaking, praying, in order to get notice?

EXAMINATION ON FRATERNAL CHARITY

1. Have I an aversion to anyone? Have I tried to overcome it? Bitterness or resentment against anyone, avoiding him or her, glad at his humiliation? Displeased if he is praised? Refusing to do him kindness?

2. Envy? discontented and sore when others are preferred before me?

3. Cross in my temper to others? Offensive answers? Said words to pain? Turned others into ridicule?

4. Contradictory? Obstinate? Quarrelsome?

5. Kind and obliging in little things?

6. Selfish; thinking only of gratifying my own wishes? Ill-tempered when my will was thwarted?

7. Too free? Wanting in respect? Vulgar?

8. Fraternal correction, when necessary? Prudent?

9. False suspicions?

10. If necessary to mention a fault to Superiors, has it been from a pure intention, or from dislike, resentment, petty revenge, etc.?

11. Am I a tale-bearer or whisperer?

12. Detraction, Calumny?

EXAMINATION ON THE SPIRIT OF RECOLLECTION

1. Curiosity to know news, and all that happens, in and out of the house?

2. Weary of solitude and separation from the world?

3. Have I taken every opportunity of talking?

4. Have I wasted much time in idle conversation?

5. Jested too much? ridiculed serious matters?

6. Too much dissipation in recreation; no intention for God at that time?

7. Omitted devotions for trifling reasons?

8. Have I done work carelessly, when unpleasant, and carefully when pleasant?

9. Am I improving in the practice of aspiration and conversation with God, or growing more remiss and idle?

10. Have I seriously fought against distraction in mental prayer, Office, etc.?

11. Respectful position in prayer? Drowsiness resisted?

12. Vocal prayer without attention?

13. Careless in preparation and thanksgiving for Holy Communion?

14. Examination of conscience at night? Before Confession?

15. Talk with those outside the house? Indiscreet: about Order, Companions, Superiors?
16. Waste of time in idle reading?

EXAMINATION ON SILENCE AND THE USE OF THE TONGUE

1. Any words sinful, scandalous, unbecoming a religious?
2. Have I indulged in idle gossip, or encouraged it in others?
3. Talk about quite useless and foolish things, e.g., eating?
4. Criticism of Superiors and others; exaggerating their defects?
5. Spoken in my own praise; slighting and detracting others?
6. Hurt the feelings of others by my words?
7. Gentle or angry answer when blamed or offended?
8. Do I complain much of every little indisposition or suffering?
9. Impetuous talking, and in loud tone?
10. Do I monopolise conversation, or am I content to listen?
11. Do I like the company of those given to silence and recollection?
12. Have I broken silence by speaking in places and times forbidden, or with persons forbidden?
13. Do I speak—when necessary—in a low voice and shortly?
14. Do I speak in Church, Sacristy, Choir, etc.?
15. Am I noisy—by quick walking, slamming doors, etc.?
16. Have I accused myself of faults against

silence in Chapter, and in confession of habitual transgressions?

17. Do I take pains to improve in silence, penance myself, etc.?

18. Do I regard silence as an important duty, preserving from sin, and leading to familiar friendship with God.

READINGS FROM THE "IMITATION OF CHRIST," RECOMMENDED BY FATHER WILBERFORCE FOR TIMES OF RETREAT

FIRST DAY

Bk I. Ch. 25. Of the fervent amendment of our whole life.

SECOND DAY

Bk I. Ch. 22. Of the consideration of human misery.

THIRD DAY

Bk I. Ch. 23. Of the thoughts of death.

FOURTH DAY

Bk I. Ch. 24. Of judgement and the punishments of sinners.

FIFTH DAY

Bk II. Ch. 10. Of gratitude for the grace of God.

SIXTH DAY

Bk III. Ch. 39. That a man must not be too anxious about his affairs.

SEVENTH DAY

Bk II. Ch. 12. Of the royal road of the Holy Cross.

EIGHTH DAY

Bk II. Ch. 7. Of the love of Jesus above all things.

Bk II. Ch. 8. Of familiar friendship with Jesus.

NINTH DAY

Bk III. Ch. 47. That all grievous things are to be endured for life everlasting.

Bk III. Ch. 49. Of the desire of eternal life, and how great are the benefits promised to them that fight.

PART THE SECOND

Thoughts for Meditation on the Life and Passion of our Lord

THE INCARNATION

I

1. Recall the history (St Luke, i).
2. See by eye of imagination our Lady's room.
3. Ask grace to know our Lord Jesus Christ intimately in this mystery and to imitate Him faithfully.

Persons

1. WHO sent the angel? God, the Holy Trinity, Three and One, holy, wise, good, after man had fallen, resolved to redeem him by offering him mercy. Who, O God, considering this, will not be inflamed with hope and joy? For if He loved man so much when an enemy by sin, how much more as adopted son in Jesus Christ? In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me not be confounded for ever.

2. Who is sent? The Angel Gabriel, the humble, obedient messenger and creature of God, so different from the proud and disobedient rebel Lucifer. Gabriel humble and beautiful, Lucifer proud and hideous. Gabriel obedient and happy, Lucifer disobedient and miserable. Humility and obedience bring beauty and happiness, pride and rebellion and self-will, deformity and misery. Gabriel means *fortitudo Dei*, the strength or fortitude of God, by which name we are taught that to co-operate with God in the salvation of souls, we must be strong

and generous in spirit. Be Thou, O Lord, my strength and fortitude.

3. To whom is the Angel sent?

To Mary, simple, modest, poor. Thou dost not know thyself, O most fair among women. In thine own eyes none lower, none more abject. Thou livest hidden and unknown. But how great in the eyes of God and the Angels! As the sun among the stars! This is joy to me, teaching me that it is not necessary to be known to men. If I love God, He and the Angels will know and esteem me, and is not this enough?

4. For whose sake is the Angel sent?

For men. All are sons of one Father, but robbed of their inheritance. What their fate if they had had no Redeemer! Redemption was promised from the beginning, but God waited. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee. In a moment of indignation have I hidden My Face a little time from thee, but with everlasting kindness I had mercy on thee, said the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isa. liv. 7, 8). One family was chosen in which the memory of the divine promise was preserved. From this family a people, but how unfaithful! Yet God is faithful. And now even, what are men? And among them what am I? Blind among the blind, foolish among the foolish, unless the mercy of the Redeemer had not set me free. How many live as if the Redeemer had not lived!

II

THE chief lesson of the Incarnation, whether in our Lord or in our Lady is Humility.

Our Lord, " being in the form of God," being God Himself, of one Nature with the Father, " thought it not robbery to be equal with God," for He knew He was God, equal to the Father in all things, " emptied Himself," made Himself of no account, hid all His attributes and perfections, " taking the form of a servant," though the Master of all, " being made in the likeness of man." God becoming man, an infinite descent, " and in habit found as a man," taking our weak nature, " He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death." Obedience is the true sign of genuine humility and it must last till death, " even to the death of the Cross," the extreme of ignominy and pain.

Our Lady, being chosen for the highest dignity, called herself, and realized that she was nothing, " the handmaid of the Lord," His lowly servant, with her eye fixed on the hand of the Master to do His Will. " Be it done unto me according to Thy Will," Here I am, O Lord, do with me whatever Thou wilt. I am Thine.

What is humility? It is that virtue which enables me, because I know the truth about myself, to despise myself in my own mind, and to desire others to despise me.

What answers to humility in the infinite Nature of God? His Truth. He sees His infinite perfection and that He is worthy of all praise, honour and glory, and He wills that all creatures should praise

Him, honour Him and give Him glory because it is His due.

The truth about us is, that of ourselves we are nothing, and that without God we can do nothing, that we are capable of every evil, and have fallen into numberless sins even in spite of His many graces. Knowing this, we ought to despise ourselves and wish others to despise us and give glory to God for anything good in us, for it is His.

Remember, O my soul, that pride is an absolutely inexcusable sin. It is wilful blindness, a wilful lie most hateful to the God of truth. For many things there is a great measure of excuse, for pride none. At the judgement seat I may say, " O Lord I was very weak in health, and I was not able to fast, to abstain, to do hard work," but can I say, " Lord, my weak health made it impossible for me to despise myself, to esteem others better than myself?" I may say, " Lord, I was poor and I could not give much in alms," but can I say, " because I was poor I could not help despising others and preferring myself to them "? I may say " I was very ignorant and had not much talent, and so I could not instruct others, or do much to spread the truth," but can I say, " Because I was so ignorant I could not help being conceited and following my own opinion "? I may say, " Lord, I had so many defects that I was not fit for much, but can I say, " I know I had so many defects that I could not bear them to be noticed and reproved "? Our kind Lord will not blame us for not imitating His wisdom, because we are foolish; His power, for we are weak; His innocence, for we are corrupt; but what excuse can we have for not imitating His humility, meekness, obedi-

ence? The more miserable and sinful we are the more lowly in mind should we be. For pride there is no excuse. No word of mercy.

The fruit of humility is the fear of the Lord; riches and glory and life (Prov. xxii, 4).

THE fruit or reward of humility is, in this life, the fear of the Lord; not servile fear, not the fear of punishment, but filial fear which implies believing in Him, hoping in Him, loving Him for His own sake, and keeping His commandments. The humble man always fears the Lord.

What is the fruit of humility in the world to come?

(*a*) Riches, true, genuine and valuable, instead of the false, hollow and worthless goods of this world. "Heap up treasures in heaven." How intensely ought I to desire these everlasting riches.

(*b*) Glory. Not vainglory or empty praise, but real glory that will fill me with eternal joy. Be humble and of the number of those who love the glory of God more than the glory of men (St John xii, 43).

(*c*) Life; life everlasting. The reward of the humble is to have a share in the life of God Himself.

Grant me, O Lord, true humility, that I may abound in riches, shine with glory in the light of Thy face, and enter into everlasting life. Amen.

The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord
is riches and honour and life. (RV.)

THE NATIVITY

"And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke, ii, 7).

Poverty taught by our Lord

1. A POVERTY that implies suffering and privation. He was born away from home, in the poverty of a roadside stable, laid in a manger. Real privation. He embraced the real poverty of the really poor.

2. A poverty that implies contempt and humiliation. With what contempt those that passed by regarded the Holy Family. The kindhearted would say, "Poor things, they have no house of their own. They are to be pitied." The proud would despise them as vagrants, and probably suspect them of being idle and dishonest.

3. A poverty that implies dependence on others and thus requires humility. The poor are dependent on others, and this in a thousand galling ways. The houses of Bethlehem were shut to them because they came in the garb of the poor. Had they ridden into Bethlehem on gaily caparisoned horses, and shown that they were well provided with worldly wealth they would have easily obtained room.

But they were poor and so they felt the dependence on others. The stable must have belonged to some one who gave leave, or tacitly allowed it to be used.

1. The suffering poverty of our Lord we have

not. Every want is amply and promptly supplied. Our Lord promised it should be so. Leave all for Him, and He showers everything on you. A hundredfold as much. You left a little cottage, you live in a spacious house. You left a little plot of ground, you have a large garden well stocked with flowers and fruits.

We must have at least no affection to these things; look on them all as His.

2. The humiliating poverty of our Lord we have not.

People honour, and rightly honour, evangelical poverty.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Matt. ii, 13-23

God gives a command for the safety of His Son.

1. This command is humiliating for Jesus Christ. It is an order to fly from His own country into exile, in Egypt, before the face of Herod. He, the Saviour of all, to fly. Ought God to fear the anger and malice of man?

" My thoughts are not your thoughts," etc.

2. To whom is this order given?

To Joseph. What an honour to be made God's confidant, the instrument of His authority! He holds the place of God the Father, the Head of the Holy Family, the Guardian of Jesus and Mary.

3. How is the command of God carried out?

(*a*) By our Lord. With what obedience and submission to His Father!

(*b*) By our Blessed Lady. Though Mother of God, she does not forget that she is the wife of St Joseph, and she obeys him.

(*c*) By St Joseph. Submission, blind obedience,

and without reply or excuse. Immediately he does exactly and literally what he is told. Though it appears unreasonable he obeys. Joseph and Mary prepare themselves at once, without trouble of mind or too great haste, without uneasy reflections on the dangers and fatigues of the way, without any complaint about an order so humbling and painful; nor about Herod the unjust persecutor. They let God do as He wills, thinking only of obedience and of the safety of Jesus. Examine the way you obey.

THE HOLY FAMILY LIVE IN EGYPT

1. Egypt. The Holy Family live there, poor, hidden and obscure, ignored by men, but the highest of the earth in God's sight. Good in the midst of bad, adoring the true God among idolaters.

2. Bethlehem. Slaughter of the Innocents. Herod's cruelty and vain and useless rage. He only carries out the designs of God in the very things he does to defeat them. He slays many to destroy one, and that One escapes. The prophecies are fulfilled, the birth of the Messiah is made known far and wide.

3. Jerusalem. Herod the enemy of God. He appears to be victorious, but in reality God triumphs. So is it always.

THE RETURN

v. 19-23

1. When did they return?

When Herod was dead. God rules over all, and it is His Will that we should wait patiently for His time, not seek to impose our time upon Him. All die, but Jesus Christ lives.

2. To whom is the order made known?

As before to St Joseph. Think of his obedience, prudence and authority.

Whither do they return?

To Nazareth, a little town of Galilee, that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophets, that He should be called a Nazarene.

This name has three meanings.

1. Consecrated, as the Prophets called Him.

2. Flower. Jesus is the flower or shoot of the branch of Jesse and David so often mentioned by prophets.

3. Inhabitant of Nazareth. It was a tradition received from the prophets that the Messiah ought to be called a Nazarene. He chose an injurious and contemptuous name.

LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST AT NAZARETH

"He was subject to them"

WHAT did this hidden life consist in?

1, Obedience.

2, Work.

3, Prayer.

1. Obedience.

(*a*) Who obeys? The Lord of all, the absolutely supreme sovereign God. Who are we? Creatures,

dependent, nothing. Vile by sin; ignorant, so that our judgements are worthless; malicious, so that our wills need guidance. He obeys, we disobey.

(*b*) Whom does He obey? Not only His Blessed Mother and St Joseph, but even sinners, and submits His holy Will to their wills. Whom should we obey? Our superiors, equals, inferiors.

(*c*) In what does He obey? In everything; in the least matters. Do we obey in little things? or do we say: " This small thing does not matter "?

(*d*) How long does He obey? Till He was thirty years of age, when grown up, not only when a child. Do we consider ourselves getting too old or too wise for obedience?

(*e*) How did He obey? (1), By external action; (2), by interior submission of will; (3), by unreasoning submission of judgement; (4), looking on commands of obedience as God's Will. What is our obedience like?

2. Work.

(*a*) Who is it that labours? Jesus Christ the Son of David and the Son of God, and yet He works. He might have gone forth and preached, and performed miracles, yet He stays at home, working as a carpenter's boy. What do we think of work? Does not this give it dignity?

(*b*) His work was humiliating. " I am poor and in labours from my youth " (Ps. lxxxvii, 16.) The humble work of a carpenter, or household work. Do we seek and love work that humbles us?

(*c*) How does Jesus Christ work? With prayer and recollection; everything serves as a reason for prayer. His heart is constantly lifted up to His Father.

(*d*) Why did He choose a humble life of labour?

To prove to us that the way to Heaven is by humility and penance. Do we seek things that humble us? Do we love penance?

(*e*) That humble hidden life gave more glory to God, and was more meritorious than all the great deeds of men. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Imitate Him, behold how humble He is, and how He labours.

3. Prayer.

(*a*) Who prays? God. He needed not prayer for Himself, but He prayed as an example to us, and for us. We need prayer. Do we neglect it?

(*b*) How did He pray? (1), With the greatest reverence; prostrate; (2), with the greatest fervour, and with the greatest perseverance.

(*c*) How often? Constantly, also at stated and regular times. How much do we pray? How many ejaculations in the day? Are our stated prayers reverent, fervent, regular?

THE RULER'S SON

Jesus being in Cana of Galilee cures the Ruler's Son who was sick at Capharnaum (St John iv, 46-54).

1. Observe the diligence with which the ruler sought our Lord (v. 47).

He must have heard about our Lord often before but he did not seek Him till driven by trouble, grief and care. When all was prosperous and happy with him he took no trouble to find our Lord, but when he was in sorrow, his son whom he loved, sick unto death, he felt that the only one to help him was our Lord Jesus Christ.

How often this is the case. A man thinks nothing of his soul as long as all goes well with him

and his household, but in the day of sorrow and mourning, in the day of affliction and trial, he turns to God.

This is one of the ways in which trial and sorrow, pain and disappointment, turn out to be, after all, blessings in disguise.

2. What did this trouble do for this ruler?

(*a*) It set him upon an earnest search for Jesus. It made him overcome all sloth, worldliness and indifference. The salvation of his soul, the duty of serving God, the glory of God, had not been hitherto enough to make him stir, but this visitor in his house, sickness unto death, roused him up, and made him take real pains to search after Jesus Christ till he found Him. How much more trouble we all are inclined to take for our bodies than for our souls, for this world than for the next, for self than for God!

(*b*) It made him pray. How many are urged to pray only by danger, sorrow, pain. Now anything that makes us *pray* is good. We cannot call it a real evil.

(*c*) It brought him a reproof from our Lord, and that occasioned spiritual light to see the self-seeking spirit in which he had sought Him.

The reproofs of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, though humiliating, are always of immense advantage to the soul.

(*d*) It brought faith to him, and not only to him, but to his whole house.

"LORD TEACH US TO PRAY"

1. Christ alone on the mount, spending nights in prayer (Luke vi, 12).
2. Our Lord teaches us to pray. (Luke xi, 1).

1. Christ often commended to His Apostles zeal for prayer, earnestness in prayer.

(*a*) In general: "It is necessary always to pray and not to faint" (St Luke xviii, 1).

(*b*) To obtain anything: "If you shall ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it to you" (St John, xvi, 23).

(*c*) To avoid all evils and dangers: "Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things."

(*d*) To overcome temptations: "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Matt. xxvi, 41).

(*e*) To put devils to flight: "This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. xvii, 20).

(*f*) To work miracles: "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matt. xxi, 22).

Prayer is the Apostolic means that ought to precede, accompany, and follow all that we do. It is the best preparation for action, the best strength in action, the best quiet after action. Other good works separate us from created things. Prayer unites us to God.

2. Christ gave constant examples of prayer to His disciples and apostles.

(*a*) As enjoying the beatific vision through His divine personality, He was always in the most absolute union with God.

(*b*) At certain times he specially prayed men-

tally, using the faculties of His soul. For this He retreated from and gave up other external occupations. This was both for our example, and to beg help for us. For as He suffered for us, so for us He prayed. Surely if Christ prayed for me, what ought I to do for myself and for others?

(*c*) In multiplied ways and times.

In childhood, in private life, in the desert forty days, through the night, etc., etc. Imitate Christ. Be faithful to the daily time of prayer in the midst of your work for others, and in free moments.

3. The apostles and apostolic men were always intent on prayer. "Without Me you can do nothing."

"We have laboured all the night and have taken nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the net" (Luke v, 5).

"However relaxed a soul may be, only let it persevere in mental prayer and God will conduct it to the harbour of eternal life" (St Teresa).

"It is morally impossible for a religious who is not a lover of mental prayer to be a good religious" (St Alphonsus).

Am I a lover of mental prayer?

"A religious without mental prayer is a religious without reason."

(*a*) No light without it: "Come ye to Him and be enlightened."

(*b*) No strength. Bartholomew of the Martyrs likens mental prayer to the fire making the iron hot that it may be bent and worked.

St Teresa says: "The man who neglects mental prayer needs no devil to carry him to hell."

Abbot Dioclas says: "The man who omits mental

prayer soon becomes either a beast (by impurity) or a devil (by pride)."

" All the saints have become saints by mental prayer " (St Alphonsus Liguori).

" In my meditation a fire shall flame out." " Without meditation it is impossible, except by a miracle, to lead a Christian life " (Gerson).

" In truth a religious not frequently and diligently praying is not only miserable and useless, but in God's sight his soul is dead in a living body." " There is no wonder that he who does not pray frequently yields miserably to temptation" (St Bonaventure).

"NEITHER WILL I CONDEMN THEE"

" THE Scribes and Pharisees brought a woman taken in adultery and set her in the midst " (St John viii, 3).

Three things were pre-eminent in Christ our Lord: truth, meekness, and justice. So it was said of Him, the Messiah, in Psalm xliv, 5, "In Thy Majesty ride on prosperously, on behalf of truth, meekness and justice."

1. As doctor, or teacher, He was distinguished for truth. He, the Truth, brought truth into the world. This, even His enemies the Scribes and Pharisees had to admit. They were able to detect nothing false in His doctrine.

O Word Incarnate, Truth itself, teach my soul. Illuminate my mind with the light of truth. " Make Thy Face to shine on Thy servant, and teach me Thy Will " (Psalm cxviii, 135). " Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths " (Psalm cxviii, 105).

2. As liberator, making us free with true freedom, " with the freedom with which Christ hath made us free," He was especially distinguished for meekness. This even His enemies were obliged to acknowledge when they saw that no insults moved Him to anger (1 Peter ii, 23, Matthew xi, 29).

3. As knowing all things, He was pre-eminent in justice and could make no wrong judgement. His enemies had not had so much experience of this, so they tried to show that in justice He failed, that they might accuse Him. Therefore they brought before Him in the Temple a woman taken in the foul crime of adultery.

They hoped that He would, in order to show His meekness and mercy, only excuse the miserable, trembling culprit, and then they would have been able to accuse Him of going against the law, which commanded that she should be stoned.

They set the poor guilty woman in the midst. Jesus sitting, the people around listening to His Words. How ashamed she must have felt! Accused in public, and before the Holy One of Israel, of a disgraceful crime she could not deny. The guilt was so clear and so recent that she could not, even if she would, answer in the words of the wicked woman in the Proverbs, who "wiped her mouth, saying, I have done no evil." In the law a wicked, unfaithful woman is condemned to be stoned. There she stood trembling and ashamed. The sinner before the infinitely holy God. Misery before Mercy.

What will be the sentence? What does justice demand? Death, everlasting damnation. The Pharisees cry out against her. And, hoping to show

that our Lord was against the law, they say, "What sayest Thou?"

Jesus rose. He looked at the Pharisees with a piercing glance, reading their souls and knowing all their sins. He knew all the malignant pride by which they despised this poor sinner, and preferred themselves. He looked also at the poor sinful woman with compassion, and then, bending down, He wrote on the ground.

What did He write?

We know not, for the Evangelist does not tell us. Some have guessed that he wrote those words of Jeremias, xxii, 29. Others, with more probability, have conjectured that He may have written what He afterwards said, "Let he that is without sin among you cast the first stone at her."

As much as to say: She is guilty, you are zealous for the law. You ask for the full rigour of the legal punishment. Let the man who feels no sin on his own conscience cast the first stone at her.

Feeling that Jesus saw all their sins, they slunk out abashed one after the other, our Lord still writing on the ground.

"And Jesus alone remained and the woman standing." Mercy and Misery.

He alone remained, because He only was without sin. "There is none that doeth good, no not one." Only Christ.

No doubt the terror of the sinner was increased.

She stood silent. Will He strike her dead?

But His eyes are full of mercy. "Doth no one condemn thee?" "No one, Lord."

Then He gave her absolution. "Neither will I condemn thee." What mercy and joy for her!

Who would not rather be judged by God than men. Scant mercy would this poor woman have had at the hands of the Pharisees. " Neither will I condemn thee, guilty as thou hast been. I absolve thee, I forgive thee." Nor must we be surprised, for " God sent not His Son into the world that He should judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (St John iii, 17). " I will not the death of a sinner " (Ezech. xviii, 32).

He absolved her from sin, not giving her any penance. He absolved her, giving at the same time perfect contrition, which took away both guilt and punishment.

He admonished her also, saying, " Go and now sin no more." The sin He hated, the person of the sinner He loved. He might have condemned both, the sinner by ordering her to be stoned, the sin by condemning her. He mercifully forgave the sin, but He warned her to sin no more. He did not say, " Live as you please, you believe in Me and therefore whatever you do you will not be lost," but " Go and sin no more." Therefore it is evident how sweet the Lord is in mercy, and yet how upright in truth.

O Lord, absolve me now in the time of mercy that I may not be condemned when Thou shalt come in justice to judge the world.

"PRAY TO THY FATHER IN SECRET"

St Matt. vi, 6

" But thou when thou shalt pray (or prayest) enter into thy chamber, and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee " (openly) ἐν τῷ φανερῷ.

These words of our Lord Jesus Christ, simple, clear and gracious, show that He approves and blesses private prayer, and promises it shall be answered. The instruction, which is a part of the Sermon on the Mount, is a contrast with the conduct of the Pharisees who " love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward."

Vainglory, the useless, idle praise of men, was the motive of their prayers. They obtained what they sought. They got what they desired. Men thought them holy, pious, men of God, but they got nothing else. They sought glory one of another, but the glory that is from God they did not seek. The best actions done for the praise of men are vain and useless.

Private prayer in public was their self-contradictory practice.

Those who seek the unseen God should seek Him in their hearts in the inner sanctuary of their souls, not in loud words, as if He were far from them. " Thou art near, O Lord, and all Thy ways are truth " (Ps. cxviii, 151). " The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him " (Ps. cxliv, 18).

Such men love to hide themselves, to be alone. This desire gave rise to the life of the hermit. It drove St Paul and St Antony into the desert, and has made countless thousands to shut themselves up in enclosed orders, that they may pray to their Father in secret. They love to go into places where no human eye can see them, there to meet Him who seeth in secret, who knows the heart.

And we who live in the world, and cannot fly from it, must do the same, as our text shows. We

must sometimes, at stated times, seek the sacred enclosure of our own rooms, shut the door, and pray to our Father, who is in secret. This is the beauty of being alone; we can find God. Prayers uttered alone, in secret, are treasured up in Heaven. They are written in God's Book of Life. They may seem to have obtained no answer. We ourselves may forget that we ever uttered them. But God cannot forget. In the day of judgement, when the books are opened, these secret, forgotten prayers will be disclosed, and rewarded before all.

Prayer is a privilege, it is true, the greatest honour, for it is an audience with the King of Heaven and earth, but it is also a duty. It is not a privilege that is optional, but also a distinct and most important duty.

We ought, indeed, to pray without ceasing. All day we should strive to live in the spirit and atmosphere of prayer. But certain times ought to be dedicated and consecrated to the set exercise of private prayer. Our Lord indicates this in the text, in the expression, " Thou, *when* thou prayest," etc.

By the word " *when* " our Lord seems clearly to indicate that we ought to have certain times for private prayer, besides the secret thought of God, which ought ever to be alive in us. The example of the saints teaches us the same. Every saint has had his stated times of prayer.

The King of Saints had peculiar seasons for communing with God. Though His thoughts were one continued sacrifice of prayer, nevertheless we read of His going up " into a mountain apart to pray," and of " His continuing all night in prayer

to God " (St Matt. xiv, 23; St Luke vi, 12). The prayer in the garden was an instance of His private prayer and the Gospel notes that this was His custom (St Luke xxii, 39).

St Peter (Acts x) went up on the house-top to pray "about the sixth hour."

In Ps. cxviii, 164, we read, " Seven times a day do I praise Thee, because of Thy righteous judgements," and in the same Psalm David describes his own practice. " I prevented the dawning of the day and cried (to Thee), because in Thy words I very much hoped. Mine eyes have looked to Thee before the morning, that I might meditate upon Thy words " (vv. 147, 148).

The early morning is here noted as one of the best times of private prayer. Early, before the sunrise, thus giving the first part of the new day to God, before the business and distractions of the day make recollection more difficult. And of Daniel it is written, " He went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime " (Dan. vi. 10).

This precept of private prayer at stated times is nowhere directly and clearly commanded, but it is implied by our Lord's words, and inculcated by His example. It is not in the Statute Law of Christ, or His Church but it is part of the Common Law.

Cardinal Newman gives two reasons for the necessity of private prayer at stated times.

1. This practice brings religious thoughts before the mind regularly.

" Prayer through the day is indeed the characteristic of a Christian spirit, but we may be

sure that in most cases those who do not pray at stated times, in a more solemn and direct manner, will never pray well at other times. Stated times of private prayer are useful as impulses to the continuous devotion of the day." The fire of love is kindled in order to burn, and throw up its sparks all day in aspirations which are like sparks flying upwards.

" In all things it is by small beignnings and appointed channels that an advance is made to extensive works."

2. The second reason. " It is a more direct means of gaining from God an answer to our requests."

The text shows this. The promise is explicit. Ask in secret with faith and humility, and your Heavenly Father will reward you openly.

Also, the regularity of private prayer prevents our forgetting God and pleases Him, whose first law is order. God loves order and regularity. Everywhere He works by law, regular, stable and constant. And God's will is that our service to Him should be regular.

Our subtle enemy knows well the importance of it. " Men first leave off private prayer, then they neglect the Mass on Sunday, then they let slip from their minds the very idea of obedience to a fixed eternal law, then they allow themselves to do what their conscience condemns, then they lose the direction of their conscience, which being ill-used, at length refuses to direct them."

Stability of mind is a great virtue. It is faith. " Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee " (Isa. xxvi, 3).

"HIS FACE DID SHINE AS THE SUN"

St Matt. xvii, 2

THE first lesson of this Gospel is a simple but most important one, from a practical point of view, namely, that if we desire to pray with profit, we must begin that holy exercise well, retiring apart with our Lord to the solitude of the holy mount that we may be alone with Him.

1. The sacred face of Jesus is the face of God Himself. " Seek ye the Lord and His power, seek ye His face evermore " (1 Par. xvi, 11).

2. That face we seek when we pray. " Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant; O save me in Thy mercy " (Ps. xxx, 17). When His face shines on us all is well, the soul is full of light, inebriated with joy, raised above all the troubles and storms of the earth. No wonder then that the happy soul cries out, "It is good for us, O Lord, to be here." In moments of spiritual comfort and consolation, when the face of our Lord is shining upon us, all seems easy, everything appears bright, and we long for that calm and happy state to continue.

But alas, that state remains but for a short time! In this world it cannot last long, even for the saints, and the joy which made the soul cry out, "It is good for us to be here," is soon changed into lamentation. " How long, O Lord, wilt Thou forget me, how long dost Thou turn away Thy face from me?" (Ps. xii, 1).

" Thou turnedst away Thy face from me, and I became troubled " (Ps. xxix, 8).

What is then to be done?

" To Thee, O Lord, will I cry" (Ps. xxix, 9).

We must go on crying out to the Lord then, in

distress and anguish, with our faces bowed down to the ground, even as the sacred face of Jesus in the garden was bowed down to the dust. We must persevere in prayer, in spite of darkness, dryness, and temptation, even if we can do no more than exclaim: " Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

Why does our Lord turn away His face and leave us in darkness?

1. Sometimes as a punishment for sin unrepented or little atoned for, or carelessly committed, or loved.

" But your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you that he should not hear " (Isaias lix, 2).

What is to be done then?

Remove the cloud of sin, and the brightness of His face will again shine on you. Cease to indulge yourself; cease to speak ill of your neighbour, etc.

" Turn away Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities " (Ps. l, 11).

2. Sometimes as a trial for our greater merit and reward. This the saints have all experienced; and in the utmost degree the King of Saints. " My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?"

Persevere then in seeking Him, for, seeking, you shall surely find.

" In a moment of indignation have I hid my face a little while from thee, but with everlasting kindness have I had mercy on thee, said the Lord, thy Redeemer " (Isaias liv, 8).

Take heed lest you join with those who strike the face of our Lord.

" And they blindfolded Him and smote Him."

When shall we see Thy face?

" My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. xli, 2).

THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD

St Matt. xx, 1-17

THE Father of the Family is God.

The vineyard is the service of God.

The workmen are ourselves.

The hours of the day are the time of our life.

The wage of the day is everlasting happiness.

Those who worked from the first hour are those who begin to work out their salvation from early years, and the rest in proportion, even to those converted in the last hours of their life. God is always seeking us, and moving us in numberless ways to work for our salvation.

He calls us to labour, to work. Thus it is seen that the Christian life is not an idle one; and hence in this parable the work of the cultivation of the vine is chosen, which requires great care and constant labour. Our soul is His vineyard. It belongs to Him (Isaias v, 3, 4, 5).

This work ought to be continual. The hired workman has to labour all day. We owe all our time to our Master; not indeed so that all has to be spent in religious exercises, but in things done for God, in the duties of our state for Him; in reasonable recreation that we may serve Him better (1 Cor. x, 31). It was not for one hour or two that the householder sent the men into the vineyard, but till the end of the day. It is to the continuing the

work to the end that the wage is attached. He who gives in before the day is done can expect nothing; a lively image of the perseverance required of us in the work of our salvation even to the end (Matt. x, 22).

Jesus Christ makes the day the emblem of our life, and this is one of the points in the parable which is most exact and accurate. When we compare our littleness with the greatness of the universe, we are as nothing, but still less is the duration of our life compared to eternity. Compared to the never ending eternity, wherein differ the longest life, and the moment in which the most ephemeral insect lives? And this short fleeting day is the only thing we care for. We forget the immense eternity that will so soon be here! Our only care is to pass in an agreeable manner the short time of our present life.

" And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle? "

How many there are to whom the same reproach can be made by our Lord. " Why stand ye idle? " Of this vice the Holy Ghost says: " Idleness has taught much evil " (Ecclus xxxiii, 29).

And even of those who are not irreligious how many are idle? Those who do nothing imagine they do no evil. Is it to do nothing that God sent us into the world? Has not work been imposed on us as the penance of sin?

As there is only one thing necessary, there is in God's sight only one real work, all other occupation is, in the eyes of God, idleness. It is in His eyes the same thing to do nothing and not to do that which we ought. However active and hard-work-

ing a man may be, if he is not working out his salvation God will say to him, " Why stand you all the day idle?" It is only the cultivation of His vineyard that He rewards. The tree that he orders to be cut down and cast into the fire is not the one that has brought forth bad fruit, but which has not brought forth good fruit. " And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness" (Matt. xxv, 30).

The excuse of the men is often valid in external life; many would work if they could. But in the spiritual life this excuse can find no place. We are, by our very nature, bound to the service of God, our Master. We have by baptism entered into a solemn engagement to work for Him. As every lawful work can help our salvation, God has made it a duty to be always done.

" And when evening was come, the Lord said to the steward, call the labourers and pay them their hire " (v. 8).

The evening of our life is the moment of reward. At death our work ceases, the wage must be given. The time appointed for working out our salvation shortens every moment. " The night cometh when no man can work " (St John ix, 4).

The same reward is given to all, that is, the same substantially. All receive the same reward, but not equally; it is not the same to all. It is the same in its nature, the possession of God; the same in effect, for it satisfies; but not the same in intensity.

Some may say, if all receive the same, why not enjoy myself till the eleventh hour? If for no other reason, yet for this, that you cannot tell when it will come. Perhaps the eleventh hour for you has already begun.

What is taught by this equality of wage?

We learn that it is not so much for length of time but for fervour in His service that God gives reward. He regards not so much the quantity as the quality. He weighs works rather than counts them. How consoling is this to sinners, who have wasted much of their time!

"And when the first also came they thought that they should receive more . . . and they murmured." (v. 10–15).

We see here the working of that terrible vice of envy, that is more common than we suppose. This vice, even in its indulgence, gives no pleasure. It caused the first murder. Men do all they can to hide it, and hide it often from themselves.

ON THE CONVERSATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ON THE WAY TO BETHANIA

St John xi, 11-16

(v. 11) "THESE things He said: and after that He said to them: Lazarus our friend sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep (v. 12). His disciples therefore said: Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. But Jesus spoke of his death; and they thought that He spoke of the repose of sleep" (v. 13).

Our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ had been in Jericho, and on his departure from that town He met a crowd with which were two blind men whom He cured (Matt, xx, 29–34, Mark x, 46–52, Luke xviii, 35–43). After this miracle, when He was alone again with His apostles, He spoke of Lazarus, whom He called by the loving name of "our

friend," and declaring he was asleep, said that He was going to Bethany to awaken him.

What title in this world could equal in dignity this one of the " Friend of Jesus " ? My Lord, give me that title! St Dominic was called the " Friend of Jesus," and I, if I will to love Him, can be His friend. If I will to become His friend I am so at once. I love Thee Divine Friend, may I love Thee for ever.

1. The small spiritual intelligence of the apostles:

(*a*) On this occasion.

The apostles showed great slowness of intelligence, misunderstanding so usual a simile, and thinking that our Lord would have gone to Bethany to wake Lazarus from natural sleep. How often we ourselves, from culpable want of thought and interest, misunderstand the commonest spiritual truths. How injurious to ourselves, and trying to the sacred Heart is this want of reflection and attention.

(*b*) On other occasions.

Before receiving the Holy Ghost how little were the apostles enlightened, how ignorant, unspiritual and narrow-minded they were. If our Lord spoke in figure, they understood His words literally; if He spoke clearly, they imagined a figure; when He warned them against the leaven of the Pharisees, they thought it was because they had no bread; when He said He would be put to death, and on the third day would rise again, they did not understand, and imagined some figure; they disputed as to which should be the first; they feared to go to Jerusalem.

How clear it is that all their later holiness, forti-

tude, spiritual knowledge, etc., came from the Holy Spirit alone.

After all the lights of the Holy Ghost, how gross, worldly and cowardly are we, owing to want of thought and prayer!

2. The goodness of Jesus.

(*a*) His goodness was so condescending.

(v. 14) "Then, therefore, Jesus said to them plainly: Lazarus is dead." Admire the gentle sweetness and patience of Jesus, making no word of complaint at their want of intelligence. How different from my impatience!

(*b*) His goodness was full of zeal.

(v. 15) "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe: but let us go to him." He rejoices at everything which turns to our advantage, instructs and confirms us in the faith. For this did He delay His journey two days, that He might instruct His apostles, and confirm their faith by an astounding miracle. For our salvation He does all, and makes everything work together for our good.

(*c*) "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there." If Jesus had been there the death of Lazarus would not have happened. His goodness, love and tenderness would not have let him die; His pity for his sisters would have made Him restore him to health. But Jesus being absent, all was natural. The righteous were afflicted, faith called into play, the miracle was worked, faith triumphed. "Be still and see that I am God" (Ps. xlv, 11).

3. The courage of St Thomas.

(*a*) Courage equal to meeting death.

(v. 16) "Thomas therefore, who is called

Didymus, said to his fellow disciples: Let us also go, that we may die with Him." His disciples were overcome with fear at the thought of going to Jerusalem, which lay near Bethany; they knew that the chief priests and rulers desired to kill Jesus, and they were afraid, thinking that if He died all their hopes of His being the Messiah would end. It was then that St Thomas, though sharing the fear and want of confidence of the others, formed his noble resolution to go with his Master and to die with Him. In any danger that may happen in His service, we also should say: " Let us also go and die with Him." Whatever happens, what better than " to die with Him " ? We must learn, too, from the fear of the apostles, perfect confidence in God against all outward appearance. He will do all things right. He will overrule all that seems so mysterious in the world for His glory, to compass His designs. The very thing the apostles thought would be utter ruin, and would extinguish all hope, was made by God to establish for ever the Kingdom of Christ in the world. However dark the prospect, put on the helmet of salvation, which is perfect unflinching trust in God, and live and die with Him. " Let us also go that we may die with Him."

(*b*) Courage able to strengthen others.

Not content with exciting brave hope in his own heart, Thomas exhorted the others not to despond, but to face death itself for the love of their Master and Lord. Courage is infectious; it strengthens others, and stirs them up to noble deeds. One of the best acts of charity to perform is to encourage others.

(*c*) The courage of Thomas was not strong

enough to preserve him from lamentable weakness. Alas, he fled with the others when the moment of danger arrived, and after the Resurrection was the most incredulous! How changeable and weak are we! To-day fervent, to-morrow weak and cowardly; full of good and noble wishes in prayer, unfaithful and inconstant in practice. Ready to " go that we may die with Him " in theory and imagination, unable to bear a surly word or a slighting remark, or even a slight insult. If we cannot be brave and persevering, noble in action and strong in danger, we ought at least to be humble and despise our vileness.

Jesus, my beloved Lord, give me grace to live and die for Thee.

CONVERSATION OF JESUS WITH MARTHA

St John xi, 17-27

1. MARTHA a model of confidence in Jesus.

" Jesus, therefore, came and found that he had been already four days in the grave." (Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.) " And many among the Jews were come to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. Martha, therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus was come, went to meet Him, but Mary sat at home."

Jesus, when, with His disciples, He had got near Bethany, was told what He well knew, that Lazarus had been four days buried. Many had come from the city to condole with the sisters on the loss of their brother. Martha, following the impulse of her active character, went immediately

to meet Jesus, at the first joyful news of His approach. Mary, the quiet spirit, sat still, waiting in grief. The attempts of the Jews to comfort her must have produced in her weariness of spirit, yet, hardly aware of their presence, she remained in silent sorrow, waiting for the Lord.

Martha could not wait. She ran to meet Him, and when she caught sight of His beloved countenance, now shaded with sorrow, she cried out: " Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died! But now also I know that whatsoever Thou shalt ask of God, God will give it Thee."

In these words of Martha we have a perfect model of the absolute trust and confidence we ought to have in Jesus.

(*a*) For the past.

' If Thou hadst been here my brother would not have died." Thou couldst have cured Him with a word. Thou art so good, merciful, tender, that Thou wouldst have cured him, and left to us our loved one. But it was Thy Will to be absent, so he died. Thy Will be done. Whatever trial, sorrow or pain has come, we must adore the Will of our Lord, and never lose confidence. If it had been Thy Will to prevent it, O Lord, it would not have happened. Thy Will be done. I thank Thee, Lord, for doing Thy own Will, in Thy own way, because it is Thy Will. Jesus is always present as He was when Lazarus died; but He was not visibly present with Lazarus, and He is not visibly present to prevent trials when He allows them. He always knows and permits them, as He did the death of Lazarus, for wise, holy, loving reasons. Do with us, Lord, whatever Thou pleasest, only give us

Thy holy love. In Thy hands all things will work together unto good for us.

(*b*) For the present.

" But now also I know that whatsoever Thou shalt ask of God, God will give it Thee."

This was perfect confidence. Her brother had been ill. She had sent to Jesus. He had not come. Now her brother is dead and buried four days. What hope was there? Yet her confidence in His goodness, wisdom and power was unshaken.

Imitate her example; however adverse, dark and hopeless all seems, have unshaken trust in His goodness, wisdom and power. Now also in these trying circumstances, in the darkness of this sorrow and loss, in the midst of this temptation, in the furnace of this humiliation, I still trust entirely in Thee, in Thy goodness to do the best for me, in Thy Wisdom to know the best for me, in Thy power to do all, and to overrule all for good. " Whatsoever, as Man, Thou shalt ask Thy Father, He will give it Thee; whatever as God, Thou seest good, will be done."

(*c*) For the future.

Martha made no positive request. She left all to Him and to His Will. She had sent saying, " He whom Thou lovest is sick." At this moment she expressed her confidence in His goodness. " If Thou hadst been here," etc. She showed her confidence in His power, saying " Now also I know that whatsoever Thou shalt ask of God, God will give it Thee," but she expressed no desire. She left all to Him, confident that He could and would do what was best, that He could raise the dead if He pleased, and would do so if it was for

God's glory, and for the good of the souls of Lazarus and his sisters.

This perfect confidence can gain the choicest favours from our Lord. "Ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (James i, 6, 7).

"Thy life shall be saved for thee, because thou hast put thy trust in Me, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxxix, 18).

"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? . . . Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord" (Ps. xxvi, 1 and 14).

2. Belief in resurrection.

"Jesus saith to her: Thy brother shall rise again."

This was true comfort, but Martha did not know whether our Lord meant more than the general resurrection of all, so to find out this she replied, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

This was the belief of the Jewish Church. Traces of it are found among heathens, and the full and clear faith among Christians.

(*a*) Among the Jews.

Among the Jews, who had best preserved the tradition of the Patriarchs, and had the most enlightened faith, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body were both one article of faith. So St Paul said, "Without the resurrection religion is vain, and we are the most miserable of men" (1 Cor. xv, 16–19; Luke xiv, 14). The infidels among the Jews, called Saddu-

cees, denied the resurrection, and with it all future life. They were called Sadducees, that is " the just," because they boasted, like modern infidels, that they did right not for reward, but for the sake of right. But the practice of virtue, where there is no hope or fear, no sanction, will be a mere chimera and never stand any test. It is an idle boast.

(*b*) Among heathens.

Though the knowledge of the resurrection of the body had been lost, that of the immortality of the soul remained, that truth being imprinted on the hearts of men as the foundation of morals.

(*c*) Among Christians.

Among us in the Christian Church, the resurrection of the dead is a doctrine clear, precise and certain as that of the immortality of the soul and of the other life. This truth should be the joy and consolation of our lives and the constant rule of our actions.

3. Consolation of the Christian Faith.

To comfort Martha our Lord gave most solid consolation for the dead and the living.

(*a*) For the dead.

He comforted Martha by words that are, perhaps, the most sublime and consoling that even His divine mouth ever uttered. " Jesus said to her: I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me although he be dead shall live." Jesus is the resurrection and the life. It is from Him that men hold the life of soul and body. His power will make all the dead to rise again; His grace will raise up those who believe in Him to a life happy and eternal. So this loved one " who departed with the sign of faith, and slept in the

sleep of peace," though dead to this world, lives by the life of Jesus Christ. He is with Him, or at least on the way to Him in peace.

(*b*) For the living.

"And every one that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die for ever." Words full of true comfort! I, who now am alive, why should I fear death? For if I believe in Jesus Christ (and with my whole heart I do believe in Him) I shall not die. I shall leave my body for a time to receive it again for ever and unable to suffer. While waiting for that great day, and in leaving my body I shall still live, I shall only change the place and manner of my life, and instead of living here, surrounded by the miseries and sins of earth, I shall live in the glory of heaven with Jesus Christ. Nature may tremble to think of the passage from time into eternity, for Nature is blind, but my faith in Jesus Christ comforts and sustains me. It is natural and right that the remembrance of my past sins should trouble and alarm me, but I detest them, I have confessed and forsaken them. My faith in Jesus Christ, in His merits, His promises, His Sacraments, His mercies, sustains and reassures me. I believe in Him; this is what He demands. With this loving faith will I present myself before Him with confidence and joy.

(*c*) Examination of our faith.

Our Lord finishes by asking Martha: "Believest thou this?" She saith to Him: "Yea, Lord, I have believed that Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God, who art come into this world."

We must examine ourselves. Do we firmly believe in these truths? We must grow daily in this saving faith, nourish it in our hearts by

prayer and holy meditation, make it the ruling principle of our lives, the one comfort of our hearts.

O Jesus, my Life, grant that I may so live in Thee, that Thou mayest be to me the resurrection to Life everlasting. Amen.

MANY MANSIONS

"In My Father's house there are many mansions" (John xiv, 2).

1. What is meant by My Father's house?

A man's house is the one he inhabits, the one in which he dwells, abides; in the same way that in which God dwells may be called His house. But God dwells in holy men, as Jeremias says, "Thou, O Lord, art in us (among us), and Thy name is called upon us" (xiv, 9).

In some, God dwells by faith (2 Cor. vi, 16). Quoting Leviticus xxvi, 12, "I will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people."

In others by perfect fruition, the enjoyment of perfect possession, "That God may be all in all."

In these two senses, then, the house of God is twofold.

One is the Church militant in this world. "The house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth" (1 Tim. iii, 15). This is the congregation of the faithful. This house God inhabits by faith (Apoc. xxi, 3).

The second house is the Church triumphant, the congregation of the saints in the glory of the Father.

"We shall be filled with the good things of Thy

house, Holy is Thy temple, wonderful in justice " (Ps. lxiv, 6).

2. Not only are the souls of holy men the house of God, but in a more wonderful way still, He is Himself His house, for He dwells in Himself. And in this house He collects us together.

We see that God Himself is His own house in 2 Cor. v, 1, where the Apostle says, " We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in Heaven."

" This is the house of glory, which is God Himself."

Man will remain in this house, that is in God, by the perfect fruition or enjoyable possession of charity, by the will and affection of the soul (1 John iv, 16), and in the intellect by the knowledge of truth (John xxii, 7).

In this house, therefore, that is, in glory, which is God, there are many mansions, that is, different participations of His beatitude; for he who knows more will have a higher place. The different participations, therefore, of the Divine knowledge and fruition, of the enjoyment of complete possession are the many mansions.

But we may ask, Can one be happier than another? At first sight it might appear not. For beatitude is the end, and that which is perfect can have no more or less, or it would not be perfect. If I possess perfect goodness I cannot possess less goodness than another who has the same perfect goodness, for, if so, either he or I have not perfect, but imperfect, goodness.

The answer is that a thing may be either absolutely perfect or only perfect in a certain particular.

The absolute perfection of beatitude can belong only to God, for God only knows Himself and loves Himself as much as He is knowable and lovable. He, and He only, knows and loves His infinite truth and goodness infinitely. Looked at in this way there is no greater or less, for His supreme and infinite good, which is the cause and object of His beatitude is infinite; it is nothing else than the one infinite good, which is God Himself.

Accidentally, or in respect to certain conditions of time, of nature, and of grace, this supreme beatitude, in itself unchangeable and infinite, can be received in a greater or less degree. So one man can be happier than another according to the degree in which he is capable of receiving the supreme good. For, according to the spiritual capacity of each man will be the degree of his participation of this infinite good; that is, in proportion as he is better disposed to, and fitted for, the possession and enjoyment of this supreme good. In two ways is a man disposed to this good, for beatitude consists in two things: (*a*) In the sight of God, and (*b*) in the enjoyed possession of God.

To the sight of God a man is disposed by cleanness of heart (Matt. v, 8). Therefore, in the degree in which a man has his heart raised above worldly things, in that degree will he be able to see God more, and more perfectly.

The soul is disposed to the enjoyment of possession by love. Therefore according to the degree of fervent love will be the degree of the enjoyment of possession.

A greater degree of merit then means the being better able to know God and to love Him.

An objection may be drawn from St. Matt. xx, where all receive a penny and where, consequently, all receive the same reward, none more and none less. But it is eminently clear that the reward of eternal life is both one and many.

1. Many according to the different capacities of those receiving it, and thus there are many mansions in the house of the Father.

2. One, in that, firstly, there is only one object. All possess God, but He is differently seen and loved according to the state and capacity of each (Job xxii, 26; Isa. xxviii, 5).

One fountain, but each one fills the vessel he brings; it is the vessel that is great or small.

Secondly, the possession of it is eternal for all; thirdly, each one rejoices in the happiness and joy of others as though it was his own, " Rejoice with them that rejoice " (Rom. xii, 15).

THOUGHTS FOR MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD

"YOU ARE BOUGHT WITH A GREAT PRICE"

THE first lesson of the Passion is the immense importance of salvation.

" Know you not . . . that you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price " (1 Cor. vi, 19, 20).

1. " You are not your own." To whom, then, do you belong? To God who made you. " Let all the earth fear the Lord, and let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him " (Ps. xxxii, 8). " For He spake and they were made; He commanded and they were created " (Ps. xxxii, 9). We are His. He made us out of nothing. We belong to Him, then, more than a house to him who built it, more than a garden to him who laid it out, more than a tree to him who planted, watered and nurtured it; more than sheep to their owner. " We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." A man can do what he pleases with his own sheep, may feed them where and how he likes, without regard to their desires, their likes or dislikes; they possess no rights; they are his, not their own. He may kill them, how or where or when he chooses, and use them for food: how much more, then, has God supreme and absolute rights over us, whom He made out of nothing, and how completely are we subject to Him. " Shall not my soul be subject to God " (Ps. lxi, 1).

Our Lord, as man, in His Passion, teaches us this complete subjection to God by sacrificing His human nature, and becoming obedient unto death, even unto the death of the Cross.

Grant, O Lord, that my soul may be ever subject to Thee in all things, at all times, in all ways. Here I am, O Lord, Thy servant, Thy property, Thy possession, the sheep of Thy pasture. Do with me whatever Thou pleasest, only give me humility and holy love. I love Thee, my Jesus, I love Thee, but I do not love Thee as I ought, or my will would not so often rebel against Thee, make me love Thee more and more.

2. " You are bought."

Those that are bought do not belong to themselves, but to those who have bought them. A slave, in countries where slavery was legal, did not belong to himself, but to the master that had bought him. His time, his labour, his clothes, his food belonged not to himself but to his purchaser. He could not live where he wished, or work at what he pleased, or for as long as he felt inclined, but all this was arranged by the master to whom he belonged and for whom he was bound to labour.

We belong by right of purchase to our Lord Jesus Christ, our blessed and loving Lord. He bought us, and redeemed us from a most bitter slavery, for we had become the bond-slaves of the devil, by making ourselves slaves to sin. Our bodies, our souls, our life, our time, our labour, all belong to Him, to do with as He pleases now and for ever, because He has bought us. " Christ died for all, that they also who live may not live to themselves but unto Him that died for them

and rose again " (2 Cor. v, 15). O Jesus, my Lord, I am Thine. I am nothing, I can do nothing, but I am Thine, help me to realize that I belong always to Thee.

3. " With a great price."

The price He paid for us was nothing less than Himself, His own Precious Blood. " Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold and silver, but with the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled " (1 Pet. i, 18, 19).

(*a*) How valuable, therefore, must our souls be in God's estimation, to be worth buying with so infinitely great a price! God, though He is all rich, could not pay a greater price; though He is all wise, He knows no greater price; though he is all powerful, He could create nothing more valuable than His own Blood—the Blood and Life of God.

(*b*) How unspeakable must be the depths of that love which made Him not spare even His own beloved Son, in order to spare us, to sacrifice Him in order to secure us, to give Him as the price for our love!

(*c*) How generous must our Lord be to spend Himself to redeem, that is, to buy us back, from a slavery base and ignominious, to which we had deliberately and voluntarily delivered ourselves, by our own act. O Jesus, I love Thee; make me love Thee more and more. Amen.

THE FIRST SORROWFUL MYSTERY, TEACHING US ABOUT PRAYER*

OUR Lord certainly means us to study all the details of this mystery, as His own instruction in prayer. We cannot have a better master than He. None of the saints can instruct as our Lord Himself; and He prayed, not because He, the Infinite God, needed prayer for Himself, but He prayed in order to be an example to us.†

Prayer is the main occupation of your lives, your life is a life of prayer. You are free from all the ordinary cares of life. Why? That you may be idle? Far from it; but that you may devote yourselves day and night, always, to prayer. The world cannot understand this. It wonders that you have "nothing to do!" Thus the Queen, after being shown round the Dominican Convent at Carisbrooke, remarked: "What a pity it is those ladies have nothing to do!" This would be the common idea. Years ago I remember a Protestant servant being asked what nuns were and what they did. She replied without hesitation: "I know what they are. They are a parcel of women who shut themselves up, to live silly." That is an encouraging idea of our vocation! To shut oneself up in a kind of religious asylum, "to live silly"! But there would be some truth in it if prayer were neglected. Prayer is the explanation of the religious life.

Our Lord had now come to the hour of His Passion. He is the infinite God, sufficient for Him-

* Notes for an Instruction to a contemplative Order of Nuns.

†Of course Christ could also pray for that which His human nature did not then possess, as, for example, the glorification of His body.—cf. *Summa* 3a, 21, 3.

self, and in Himself, yet for our instruction He did two things.

First, He allowed all the bitter waters of tribulation to flood His soul. His soul could not be carried away by any sudden movement as our souls are; but He now allowed His soul "to grow sorrowful, and to be sad." It was as if the passion of fear had been there. And He said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." Therefore, though He is so perfect, He can understand all we feel. He can and does sympathize or suffer with us.

Secondly, in this sadness and sorrow, "tempted in all things like unto us," He prayed, prayed for three hours, prayed with great reverence and perseverance, with perfect trust and close union with His Father's Will. He did not need prayer, though He was really man, because He was also perfect God, but He prayed as if He did need it, to show us by His example what we are to do in the time of need

How our Lord Prayed

1. He withdrew Himself apart, first leaving all but three of His apostles, the same three who had seen Him transfigured on Mount Tabor. He entered the garden with them. After commanding them to pray with Him, saying, "Pray lest ye enter into (that is, fall under) temptation," He left (even) them, and "was withdrawn from them a stone's cast," and kneeling down He prayed. Solitude, we see, helps prayer. That is one reason for withdrawing as much as possible from the world and all distracting company, even that of good people, that we may converse with God. The prayer of our Lord was begun with the utmost reverence. "And when He had gone forward a

little He fell flat on the ground " (St Mark xiv, 35). He first bowed down body and soul to adore His Father, teaching us always to begin our prayer with reverence.

We are so weak and our minds so wandering that we cannot hope to be free from distractions. But we must try to prevent them from being wilful, and to accomplish that, the first thing is to begin well in God's presence. To give us an example of this our Lord withdraws Himself, kneels, and then, prostrate, with His divine countenance bowed down in the dust of the earth, He adores.

Examine how you begin your prayer. This is the important thing, because it is within our power. There is no use in accusing ourselves of having distractions, that is inevitable, but the important question is, Were they voluntary? Were they my own fault? To decide this ask yourself: " How did I begin my prayer, and when I saw that I was distracted, did I turn promptly back to God? " These two questions are the useful ones for examination of conscience and confession.

The words employed by our Lord are recorded for our instruction. They are short, much shorter than the Lord's Prayer. This one short prayer He repeats, over and over again, with ever growing fervour for three hours.

The prayer begins with a word of loving confidence, " Father." He has taught us to begin in like manner, " Our Father." Thus our Lord shows us the first conditions of prayer, humility and filial confidence. Humility by prostrating with His face on the ground, confidence by the word " Father."

"If it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." This is a short petition. He prays that the chalice of His Passion may pass away, and He repeats this one petition for the space of three hours. What a lesson in prayer is that! Can we pray better than He? Can we find a wiser master of prayer? If then we repeat during all our prayer one short petition, we are praying exactly according to His example and after His model. Yet many would be afraid to do this, and would imagine they had failed, on account of the simplicity of such prayer.

Lastly, there was an act of resignation: "But not my will but Thine be done."

THE PRAYER OF CHRIST

"Kneeling down He Prayed"

ST THOMAS gives four reasons for meditating on the Passion of Jesus Christ.

1. Because by it we learn how much God loves man, and by that we are urged to love Him in whom only man can be saved.

2. Because in His Passion He has given us examples of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, etc., which are necessary for salvation.

3. Because we are led to hate sin, which cost Jesus Christ His Blood.

4. Because Christ's death on the Cross teaches us that no kind of death should be feared by a man living a good life.

The first scene of the Passion is the prayer in the garden, and it contains many heavenly lessons.

An objection might occur to the mind about the prayer of Christ. Prayer "is to ask suitable things from God" (3^a, 21, 1 ad 1^m). Now Christ is God, the

very God, therefore He is almighty, and could do all things, and therefore ought not to pray, or to ask another to grant Him things suitable, for if I can do a thing myself by my own power, I need not ask.

The answer lies in remembering the Catholic doctrine about the Incarnation. Prayer may be defined as an "explanation or manifestation of our own will to God, that He may grant it." Now if in Christ there were only one will, that is the divine will, the will of His Godhead, the will of Christ as God, He could in no way pray. God cannot pray, for there is no one greater to whom He could raise His mind and will. The will of God, and therefore of Christ as God, does all it wills, "All that the Lord hath willed He hath done" (Ps. cxxxiv, 6). But in Christ there is besides a true human will, because He is true man as well as true God, and the human will is not able of itself to do what it wills, and therefore the human will of Christ could not of itself do what it desired, except through the power of His divine nature.

Therefore Christ, as man, having a human will, could pray.

So when it is said that Christ is almighty and can do all things, it is true of His divine nature, but not of His human nature, which is not almighty.

If we consider Christ as a divine Person, He is only one Person, and as one Person, God and Man, He willed to pray; not as if He were not almighty, not as if, like us, He was weak and needed prayer, but for our instruction.

1. To teach us, and prove to us that He is from the Father. As Son, born from the Father

from all ages. As man made by the Father. As God Man sent by the Father.

"He did not need prayer. He prayed for our sake that the Son might be made manifest" (St Hilary).

2. That He might give us an example of prayer. He allowed His soul to be assailed by sorrow, sadness (St Matt. xxvi, 37), fear, depression. "He began to be heavy" (St Mark xiv, 33). Why did He allow these assaults of what, in us, are dangerous passions?

One reason was to show us how they are to be met when they attack us.

He left even His three chosen disciples and went forward by Himself, and first kneeling, then falling flat on His face, He prayed.

(*a*) With confidence: "My Father," a word expressing all the trust and confidence of love.

(*b*) Let this chalice pass from Me," a short petition asking for what He knew was not to be, but showing us that we may beg that the chalice of suffering, temptation, etc., may be removed, provided that we always add:

(*c*) "But not my will, but Thine be done." Perfect resignation. Humility, expressed by His prostrate attitude and by His words of complete submission.

(*d*) "Being in an agony He prayed the longer" (St Luke xxii, 43). He thus teaches us perseverance in prayer. We must continue till the temptation has gone and we are strengthened by an angel from Heaven. Continue always and every way in prayer. "Let nothing hinder thee from praying always . . . for the reward of God continueth for ever" (Ecclus xviii, 22).

The one way of dispelling the heavy clouds of

sadness and depression is to pray. " Is any of you sad: let him pray" (James v, 13).

The one way to obtain strength in times of temptation is to pray. " Our God is our refuge and strength. A helper in troubles which have come heavily upon us " (Ps. xlv, 1).

Some temptations we must fly from, viz., against purity and faith, and then God is our refuge; other temptations must be manfully met and fought with, and then God is our strength.

Both need prayer.

Without prayer we cannot take refuge, " The name of the Lord is a strong tower of defence, the just man shall run to it, and shall be exalted above his enemies "; and without prayer we cannot expect the strength of God.

" He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him;
I am with him in tribulation;
I will deliver him;
I will glorify him " (Ps. xc, 15).

Here is a magnificent promise to encourage us to pray, not merely to repeat words, but to cry to Him, with the cry of the inmost heart and soul. " Let my cry come unto Thee."

He promises:

(*a*) To hear us. To bow down His ear to listen. No real cry of the heart will go unheard, especially when we cry in Christ's name and person.

(*b*) To be with us in trouble, in danger, in temptation, in sadness, in difficulties of all kinds.

(*c*) To deliver us, from evil, from sin, from the evil one.

(*d*) To glorify us—in this world by giving us victory, and in the next by the light of glory.

He Himself will be our reward, exceeding great.

THE REPENTANCE OF ST PETER

St Matt. xxvi, 75; St Mark xiv, 72; St Luke xxii, 61, 62.

1. His repentance was supernatural.

(*a*) It was caused by the look that our Lord, turning round, gave him. "And the Lord turning looked on Peter" (St Luke, xxii, 61). As the unfaithful apostle was swearing that he knew not His Lord and Master, and had no part with Him from whom he had received so much, and whom he really loved, Jesus turned and looked in his face, showing that He knew all and heard all. Their eyes met. What did Peter see in the sacred eyes of his Lord?

(1) A look of deep pain and disappointed love. How sharp to the Sacred Heart was the pang of this ingratitude! "Sharper than a serpent's tooth to have a thankless child." How much more sharp to have one who returns benefits by insults!

(2) A look of unspeakable sweetness, compassion and love, instead of the anger he deserved.

Thus does Jesus look on us when we have sinned. O loving Jesus I repent: look on me, dear Lord, with mildness, mercy and love. When I see Thee for the first time, O my Lord, may it be with a look of mercy and love. I repent of the grief and pain I have caused Thee.

(3) Besides this external look, our Lord gave Peter an internal look, piercing his soul. "All things are naked and open to His eyes" (Heb. iv, 13; Ps. lxxxix, 8). This piercing glance of Jesus enlightened his heart, softened and humbled it, inflamed it with love, prostrated it with sorrow. Ask our Lord to look on you before confession, and whenever you have sinned, with the same loving

and conquering glance. "Let the light of Thy countenance shine on Thy servant."

(*b*) His repentance was caused by the remembrance of what Jesus had said.

"And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, when He had said: Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt thrice deny Me" (St Mark xiv, 72).

How sorrowful the remembrance was to the mind of Peter! He had not believed our Lord, and so had gone rashly into occasions of sin. Now, by sad experience, he has learnt how true was the warning of his loving Master. How true shall we all find the words of Christ, for this world and the next! How often we believe what He has said about eternal reward and punishment, as if we believed it not! Believe Him, and not the world.

2. His repentance was real and efficacious.

"And going forth he wept bitterly" (Matt. xxvi, 75).

(*a*) Peter showed how sincere his repentance was by "going forth."

(1) This was necessary to avoid the occasion of sin. Overcome with shame and sorrow, he felt that his only safety was in instant flight, lest he might be tempted to fall again, and more deeply. He allowed no idea of making reparation or asking pardon to stop him, but fled at once. How often is this instant flight the only way to ensure a real and efficacious conversion! Reparation and the rest will come in good time, for the present fly quickly from the danger, lest you perish.

(2) This would have been difficult if his conversion had been only half effected, not thoroughly generous. After the first denial, he must have felt that in flight was his only safety, but he lingered,

and fell again and again. Sincerity of conversion is proved by generous avoiding of dangerous occasions.

(3) For a soul like Peter's, truly converted, this "going forth" is easy. After his first fall Peter thought of going forth, after the second he made no attempt, after the third he would have been still further from it, but for the look of Jesus. But when he saw his soul in the light of his Master's countenance, he hesitated not a moment, but went forth promptly and decidedly. This is the way that a true conversion makes us fly from the occasions of sin.

(*b*) Peter shows the sincerity of his conversion by his tears of repentance.

(1) "He wept bitterly." Immediately on leaving the occasion of sin he began to weep. There was no delay. Hardly had our Lord looked at him before he began to wash out his sins by tears of repentance. How often have I sinned? How often wept over my offences?

(2) His tears were bitter; "he wept bitterly," because he was thinking of God, of the offence to Him, and because all the love of his heart had been awakened by the gracious look of Jesus.

(3) He thus wept not once, but constantly. It is related of him that he could not hear a cock crow without bitter tears of sorrow. "My tears have been my bread day and night" (Ps. xli, 4). As David, so Peter could say: "Every night I will wash my bed, I will water my couch with my tears" (Ps. vi, 7), and with Jeremias, "My eyes have failed with weeping" (Lam. ii, 11). The gentle love of Jesus, and his own ingratitude and infidelity, made him lament all his life over his

fall. If we love, can we cease to weep over our heartless sins? Are our sins or our tears of sorrow the more abundant and continual? The number and malice of our sins and the constant mercy of Jesus should make us repent with bitter tears.

3. Repentance rewarded.

(*a*) By the restoration to St Peter of all the privileges of his vocation.

Though he fell so grievously, Peter, far from being driven in disgrace from the sacred body of the twelve, was made head of the apostles and the vicar of Jesus Christ. Peter, who at the voice of a servant-maid denied his Master, is made door-keeper of Heaven and dispenser of the treasure of God.

(*b*) By the fidelity with which he fulfilled all the duties of his vocation. His sin did not hinder him from becoming the vicar of Jesus Christ, the rock on which His Church was to be built. His weakness did not prevent him from becoming a martyr, and following his Master in a death on the Cross. His former weakness showed that all his faith and constancy came not from nature, but from the grace of the Holy Ghost.

Jesus, look upon me, and as I have so often imitated St Peter in his falls, grant that my repentance may be like his, true, genuine and persevering. Amen.

THE SCOURGING OF OUR LORD

1. "Then he released to them Barabbas, and, having scourged Jesus, delivered Him unto them to be crucified" (S. Matt. xxvii, 26; St Mark xv, 15; St John xix, 1).
2. Picture to yourself our Lord bound to the pillar and cruelly scourged for our salvation.

1. SEVERITY of this punishment.

A punishment cruel in itself, and still more terrible if we consider:

(*a*) The delicate nature of His adorable Body,

(*b*) The fury and hate of His executioners,

(*c*) The object Pilate had in view, which was to reduce Him to so pitiable a condition that even the Jews might relent.

(*d*) The number and severity of the blows He received.

Now, indeed, O my beloved Jesus, Thou art "despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity." How can I help loving Thee, O loving Jesus, for Thou hast borne my infirmities and carried my sorrows, Thou hast been wounded for my iniquities and bruised for my sins, the chastisement of my peace is upon Thee, and by Thy stripes we are healed. It is I, O Lord, who deserve these stripes; it is my sins that have merited them.

O, my soul, what resolution shall I make at this sorrowful spectacle, as to mortification of my senses, and of that sinful flesh for which my beloved Lord has suffered so much?

2. Shame of this torture.

The punishment of a slave. All the circumstances are full of shame and confusion.

He endured this shame

(*a*) To spare us the unspeakable shame we

should feel if we were to stand before his throne of judgement, stripped of the garments of His grace and without any of the ornaments of virtue.

(*b*) To clothe us with a holy and salutary shame at the thought of the many shameful sins we have committed against Him.

I adore Thee, O my Jesus, suffering for me. Thou art so great and yet Thou humblest Thyself thus. I am so little, yea nothing, yet I cannot endure the least confusion or humiliation. Thou art so holy, and yet Thou art scourged, I am so sinful and desire to suffer nothing.

THE TWO LAST WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST AND HIS DEATH*

1. JESUS declares that all is consummated or finished.

(*a*) In what sense did our Lord say this? "Jesus, therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated" (St John xix, 30).

That is, all the oracles of the prophets concerning Me, my person, life and death are now accomplished; all the points of the law, all the ordinances and figures are fulfilled; all the Will of My Father has now been carried out; all the price of the redemption of man has now been paid; all the work of the redemption, reconciliation, and justification of men is now ended; all the fury of the devils is now exhausted; all the torments are ended, My sacrifice has been accepted, the holocaust is consumed, My victory is complete; only one thing now remains—that I should die, that My Soul

* Ushaw, Holy Week, March, 1893.

should be separated from My Body, and now willingly, lovingly, I die.

O my Saviour and my Lord, I rejoice that at last Thou hast come, so gloriously and so triumphantly, to the end of Thy immense labours, of Thy ignominy and of Thy sufferings. I applaud Thy victory. But what thanksgiving do I not owe Thee, for it is for us that Thou hast conquered, that Thou hast suffered, that Thou hast obeyed, that Thou hast paid, that Thou hast sacrificed Thyself, that Thou art consumed; it is for us Thou hast pronounced this word: "All is consummated"; in order that it may penetrate our hearts, fortify us against the rigours of Thy justice, fold us in the embrace of love, and serve us as an example to imitate.

(*b*) In what sense a man ought to say this at the hour of death.

A Christian, a follower, a member of Christ ought to say these words which apply in some proportion to himself, at the hour of death. He ought so to live and serve God that at the end of his life he may be able with some truth to say, all is finished. I am even now ready to be sacrificed, and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, I have loved the Church, and I die in her bosom; I have walked in the way of God's commandments, I have done what He commanded me and avoided what He forbade; I embraced the state of life to which He called me, I have fulfilled the duties He imposed on me; I have loved Him above all things and my neighbour as myself; trials and adversities as well as prosperity I have received from Him with resignation, nay, with thanksgiving; if I have offended others I

have asked pardon, and I have freely forgiven those who have offended me, that God may pardon me; if I have stained the garments of my soul by sin I have washed away the stain in the Precious Blood and in the Sacraments of Penance; if a debt still remains, my Saviour has paid it for me; I unite my sufferings to His, my sacrifice to His; my confidence is all in Him; I have received the last pledge of His love, and the last remedy of my sins; it now remains but to die, and with joy do I die with Him. What ought we not to be ready to do in order to be able truthfully to say this to Jesus Christ at the hour of our death?

(*c*) In what sense must a sinner dying without repentance say this? A sinner dying in his sins can say these words indeed, but in a different sense. All is finished—pleasures, honours, riches, amusements, etc., all is passed and gone.

I die, and in dying lose all I have loved, all I have sought, and eternity remains.

2. Jesus cries aloud and commends His soul to His Father.

(*a*) Jesus commends His soul.

"And Jesus crying with a loud voice said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit. And saying this He gave up the Ghost" (St Luke xxiii, 46).

All, sinners and saints, must give back their souls one day into the hands of God. The body comes from the earth, to the earth it must return. The spirit, the soul, comes from God, to God it must return. God gives us a soul, it is now in our own hands, we can do with it what we please. We can make it serve the body, seek pleasure, devote itself to sin; or, with God's help we can make it

His own, devote it to His will, unite it to God. Hear our Lord crying to us from His cross that that which He is doing for us we must one day do for ourselves, and render our souls to Him.

(*b*) Jesus gives back, commends, His soul into the hands of God, His Father.

Into the hands of God our Father, our wise, holy, tender, loving, powerful Father, our Father who is in Heaven. The Son in the hands of the Father. In the first word and in the last He uses the word Father, a word of love and confidence. In the first He prayed for us, " Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," and in the last He gives us the example of perfect trust, complete abandonment, entire and loving resignation into the hands of God. " Into Thy hands," that is, into Thy power and keeping. The Hands of God, what are they? The Scripture means the intellect and will of God by the word hands; the allwise Intelligence and the almighty Will of God who made us and in which all can rest. "The souls of the just are in the hands of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them " (Wisdom iii, 1).

I commend My Spirit, that is, My Soul; I give and commit to Thee My soul, which is all Thine, that Thou mayest receive it into the bosom of Thy paternal goodness and providence. In nearly the same sense St Stephen said, " Lord Jesus receive my spirit."

So we ourselves in life and death are and should offer ourselves willingly to be in God's hands; hands all powerful—no one can withdraw us from them, or snatch us out of their protection. Hands guided by eternal wisdom, knowing us and all we

are, our weakness, our poverty, our malice, our goodwill.

Hands that made us; our souls out of nothing, our bodies out of the dust of the earth.

Hands that direct us, govern us, chastise us. Hands of our loving and tender Father, to whom we speak with the words of David: "Thou art my God, my lots are in Thy hands, deliver me out of the hands of my enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant, save me in Thy mercy" (Ps. xxx, 15).

Into those hands with unfailing love and unshaken confidence did our Lord commend His human soul amidst the sorrow and agony of His death.

We, as we are unable to see the hands of the unseen God, His wisdom and power, look at those hands of God made Man, those sacred hands of Jesus that had touched the blind and they saw, the sick and they were healed, the dead and they rose again; those hands pierced for us with nails, dropping Blood from the wounds of the nails, retaining in Heaven the marks of the wounds suffered for our salvation.

Thy soul, O Lord Jesus, was all pure and holy, and with perfect calmness Thou couldst commend it into the hands of Thy Father; but I am sinful, dear Lord, and I remember that "it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God," and therefore do I commend myself into Thy wounded hands, begging Thee to offer me into the hands of Thy Father. Thou hast said, praying for us, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Do Thou present our

souls with Thine to the eternal Father. " Father into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

" And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit. And saying this he gave up the ghost" (St Luke xxiii, 46).

Imagine that you see before you Mount Calvary on the first Good Friday. The ungrateful city lies at its foot, the crowd covers its slope, the soldiers, the scribes and Pharisees are on the summit, at the foot of the cross stands transfixed by sorrow the mother of Jesus, and St John, and Mary of Cleophas and St Mary Magdalen. On each side are the thieves, and on the cross hangs the wounded body of our beloved Jesus, dying for us. See, He lifts His head, His eyes once more look up to Heaven, a loud cry comes forth from His mouth, showing by its loudness that He is supreme master of His own life, the words come forth: " Father into Thy hands I commend My spirit." And saying this He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

At that moment a sword, a spiritual sword of anguish, pierced thy heart, O loving but desolate Mother of God. O by thy grief help me to meditate on the last words of thy Son

O thou Mother, Fount of love,
Touch my spirit from above;
Make my heart with thine accord,
Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my heart to glow and melt
With the love of Christ my Lord.

PART THE THIRD

Papers on Miscellaneous Subjects

I

SPIRITUAL CHILDISHNESS

" WHEN I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child" (1 Corinthians xiii, 11).

Spiritual imperfection is here likened to childhood, and perfection to manhood. How many of us are there who never rise above spiritual childhood, and yet think themselves advanced, who have grown old in years, but have remained childish in spirit.

" Speaking as a child," vain, idle, foolish things, though professing to be serious, wise and full of the Holy Spirit. " They talk of vanity every one with his neighbour " (Psalm xi, 2).

Judging as a child, that is, approving and rejecting things foolishly, without judgement and wisdom, as children do, who often despise things of value and seek trifles. " How long will you love childishness, and fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves " (Proverbs i, 22)?

All those " understand as children" who despise and neglect spiritual things and cleave with affection to earthly and temporal ones. Saint Paul weeps over those grown men with childish ideas, judgements and tastes, " whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things " (Philippians iii. 19).

" I thought as a child," that is of vain and idle things. " The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vain " (Psalm xciii, 11). So grown up men, when their thoughts are directed to vain passing things, not to God, think as children vain, idle thoughts, still more, bad, evil thoughts.

Thoughts and desires of mere earthly honours, riches, pleasures, are of spiritual childhood: to put them off, to see their foolishness is no great spiritual accomplishment, but only to begin to be a man; to put off the things of a child, to commence to see things aright, as they are, and to think, judge and speak as a man.

The three things are enumerated by the Apostle in inverted order, for we must know before we can judge, and judge before we speak.

This inverted order suits well the foolishness of children, who speak without judgement and judge without thought and deliberation.

Am I a child or a man in spirit in my thoughts, judgements and words about the pleasures of life? The child in spirit loves them, his heart burns within him at the thought of worldly happiness, domestic comfort, moderate wealth, independence, castles in the air, day dreams of what can never be. James and John were spiritual babes when they dreamt of being in the two most honourable places in His kingdom. Love of display, greedy desire of praise, love of the comforts and luxuries of life, many things are tolerated in children that ought to be grown out of in mature age.

Love of worldly comforts and luxuries unhappily often grows stronger as our years advance. Is it not a shocking state of mind for those in a state which is one of tending towards perfection?

A full-grown man with the ideas and the tastes of a child! To think and talk of food, drink, amusements, etc., is it not spiritual childhood? To take a delight in idle and vain reading, is it not the taste of the child in God's ways?

When shall I grow " a man " and put away the things of a child? Newman has most beautiful and practical remarks on this subject of spiritual infancy, childhood and manhood in the last sermon in the first volume of *Plain and Parochial Sermons*. " It is a truth," he says, " which cannot be gainsaid, that to break with the world " (in spirit) " and make religion our first concern " (to put God always first) " is only to cease to be children." Those who have come to mature years and yet do not even so much as this are, in the presence of the Angels of God, an odious and unnatural spectacle, a mockery of Christianity. I do not say what such men are in God's sight, and what are their prospects for the next world, for that is a fearful thought, and we ought to be influenced by motives far higher than that mere slavish dread of future punishment to which such a consideration would lead us. True, though to think of the loss of God is most salutary and not slavish.

II

THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS TIME

" I RECKON that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us " (Romans viii, 18).

The Apostle has just said (16) that the " Spirit beareth witness to us that we are the sons of God," and that, therefore, being sons of God, we are

" heirs of the kingdom " of our Father, joint heirs with Christ, from being joined to Whom we become children of God. He then concludes that if we are thus joined to Christ we must suffer with Christ, in order that we may be glorified together with Him and being one with Him in the sufferings of His earthly life we may be able to be joined with Him in the glory of His everlasting kingdom.

This, then, is the cause of the delay of our immortal life, although Christ has triumphed over death and purchased for us the everlasting kingdom. The reason the possession of it is delayed is that we may suffer with Christ and win the kingdom, as He did Himself.

The Apostle then comforts us, and bids us not to be faint-hearted when we hear that we must suffer with Christ before we can reign with Him in the majesty of His glory. The consolation is that the sufferings of this time are not to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.

Notice the exact words of St Paul, for they are full of instruction and comfort.

1. He does not say simply, "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come," but the form of expression is, "I reckon." The great Apostle was giving his own experience after having tasted both, and therefore he testifies by his own personal knowledge that the greatest sufferings of this life are nothing compared with the immense reward which they will purchase for us in eternity.

In 2 Cor. xi, St Paul gives an account of his extreme sufferings; "in many more labours, in prisons more frequently," and in 2 Cor. xii he relates how he was rapt into Paradise and heard

secret words. He then speaks with experience both of heaven and earth.

2. A closer examination of his words will show the supreme excellence of the future reward and that in four ways:

(*a*) By calling the reward " future," he reminds us that it will be eternal, and, therefore, that as what is passing cannot be compared to what endureth for ever, so the present sufferings cannot be compared to the future reward. Future implies eternal because, after time, nothing remains but eternity. " For the things which are seen, are temporal: but the things which are not seen, are eternal " (2 Cor. iv, 18).

(*b*) He shows the immense dignity and height of the reward by calling it " glory," which word signifies a certain brightness and lustre of dignity and majesty. " The saints shall exult in glory " (Ps. cxlix, 5).

(*c*) He reminds us that this glory will then be seen and recognized and acknowledged by all. The saints have glory now, but it is hidden. " This is our glory, the testimony of our conscience " (2 Cor. i, 12). But afterwards all will see and acknowledge it.

(*d*) He reminds us how true and real this glory will be by the words " in us." Glory in this world is vanity, because it is derived from external and merely passing things. " They shall glory in the multitude of their riches." But the glory to come is of those things that are within a man. " The kingdom of God is within you."

So " the sufferings of this time," if looked at in themselves, " are not worthy to be compared to the future glory which will be revealed in us,"

according to Isa. liv. 8. "In a moment of indignation have I hid My face a little while from thee, but with everlasting kindness have I had mercy on thee, said the Lord, thy Redeemer."

But if we consider the sufferings of this time inasmuch as a man bears them willingly for God, for love (which comes to us from the Holy Spirit), looked at thus they are worthy of future glory inasmuch as by them future glory can be merited as a reward.

103, "The Means to ten mortification"

III

THE SPIRIT OF MORTIFICATION

St Luke xiv, 25; St Matt. xvi, 24

'Tis when we suffer, gentlest thoughts
Within the bosom spring.
Ah! who shall say that pain is not
A most unselfish thing?

Faber.

No love without depth, no depth without sorrow;
For the tears of to-day are the joys of to-morrow.

Faber.

"And there went *great* multitudes with Him": not a select few. All kinds of people, good, bad and indifferent. Many rough and uneducated, many with very few spiritual ideas. The Master is walking, they following, very much from curiosity, wondering what He would do next.

Jesus Christ turned and looked at them. He knew them all perfectly. When a preacher sees a large congregation, they are simply men and women to him, but our Lord knew His hearers individually, could call them by their names, and could tell them "all things whatever they had done."

He spoke to this great unlettered crowd, and, in

short, terse, emphatic words, He taught the highest principle of spiritual life, the doctrine of universal mortification. "If any man come to Me, he cannot be My disciple unless he hate father and mother, wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also."

Here is the first Gospel lesson. To be His disciples, to belong to His school, His family, we must give up, sacrifice, disregard in comparison to Him all we love best, and, after we have done that, what is harder still, even our own life and all that life implies, all that stands between us and Him.

This is the law of Christian self-denial. God must be first. We must love Him only, with our whole mind, our whole heart, our whole soul and our whole strength. Therefore must we cut off all that stands between us and Him.

If this is the case as a condition of His service, how much more is universal self-denial necessary for those who aspire to the special union of love? If you want to aspire to God, to adhere to Him, to have one mind and will with Him, self-denial must go before. Why? Because there are a multitude of visible and invisible things that stand between us and God. These must be removed before we can see Him and approach to Him. We are bound by chains, the love of created things and of ourselves; these we must break before we are free to go to Him. We cut them by self-denial, mortification of the senses and of the passions.

"The cords of sinners have encompassed Me, but I have not forgotten Thy law" (Ps. cxviii, 61). I am still bound, attached, kept back from Thee

by many cords, the cords that sinners entangle themselves in, that keep me back from Thee, yet I have not forgotten the law of self-denial Thou hast laid down. Give me courage and resolution to cut these cords, that nothing may keep me from union with Thee. Unless by self-denial I cut all these cords it is impossible to be united to Thee.

O Lord, Thou art my portion; I have said, long ago, " I will keep Thy law " (Ps. cxviii, 57). I will do Thy Will, please Thee, unite myself to Thee, love and be attached to none but to Thee. When I had said, " I will keep thy law of love," the first thing I did was to pray. " I entreated Thy face, Thy favour with my whole heart " (Ps. cxviii, 58). " Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to Thy word. Thou hast promised, if I seek Thee with my whole heart. I have thought on (examined) all my ways and turned my feet to the paths of Thy Will " (Ps. cxviii, 59). " I am ready, and am not troubled "; it is no trouble to me that I must do many painful things before I can be united to Thee. " I am ready " (Ps. cxviii, 60).

" The cords of the wicked have wrapped me round: but I have not forgotten Thy law " (Ps. cxviii, 61) of self-denial. What is that law? To deny myself, to take up my cross: how often and when? Daily, always and to follow Thee.

What self-denial must I practise in order to enter into close union of love?

I must cut off with the knife of self-denial everything visible and invisible, without and within, of which God is not the true cause.

Some mortification and self-denial is necessary for salvation for all; of this our Lord has said: " If

thy eye lead thee into sin, pluck it out" (St Mark ix, 46). Other kinds and degrees are of counsel: "He that can take it let him take it" (St Matt. xix, 12).

We must consider if there be anything that is the occasion to us of sin, venial sin, and then manfully cut it off. That cannot come from God. God cannot be its true cause.

IV
UNCREATED WISDOM

God "hath given her" (wisdom) "to them that love Him" (Ecclus i, 10).

Love God, delight in Him, seek His face, labour to please Him, and He will pour forth wisdom into your soul.

Wisdom is either the Godhead, the Second Person, or the created gift communicated to men. "The Lord by Wisdom (the Eternal Son) hath founded the earth, He hath established the heavens by prudence" (Prov. iii, 19).

"The love of God is honourable wisdom" (Ecclus i, 14). All those who love God have true wisdom (described in Wisdom vii, 22–29), which brings honour. True honour is that which comes from God. Wisdom (Wis. vii, 27) makes men the friends of God, through love.

"The fear of the Lord is the religiousness of knowledge" (Ecclus i, 17). The fear of God makes knowledge religious, and prevents its possession from puffing up man against God, and making him deny God's revelation and mysteries of faith. Learning makes impious men who have

no fear of God all the more dangerous. The fear of the Lord keeps a man's knowledge and learning under the yoke of religion and faith. This religious and humble use of knowledge (18) keeps the heart in the love of God, and in union with Him; justifies the heart, keeping it in the grace of God, and increasing its grace; gives true joy that comes from charity, joy in believing, and gladness that is the happiness of mind and soul.

The fear of the Lord, which implies love (19); reverential and filial fear that makes us love and do His Will, has two effects:

1. For life. It makes everything go well (Rom. viii, 28), it makes everything during life work together unto our good, " it shall go well with him that feareth the Lord."

2. For his death. " In the days of his end," that is, in the end of his life he shall be blessed, blessed by a holy death, blessed and happy just in those days of the evening of life, of which we should naturally feel, without the love of God, " that they please me not " (Ecclus xii, 1).

Love God, then, and all will be well. O my God, give me wisdom that will make me Thy friend; give me Thy fear and love, that it may go well with me now, and that I may be blessed and happy at the end of my life and the hour of my death. Amen.

To fear God with reverential fear, not servile but loving, filial fear of God, "is the fullness of wisdom" (20), complete and true wisdom. It makes men truly wise. The five wise virgins had this fullness, their vessels were full of oil. The foolish ones had empty vessels, because they had not the filial love and fear of God. An empty soul is one that does

not love God, a full soul is one that loves Him and His Will. " Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips " (Ps. lxii, 6). The more we love God the more full are we of wisdom. O Lord, give me Thy love. Fill my soul with true wisdom, with the marrow and fatness of Thy charity that I may be pleasing to Thee. Seat of wisdom, full of grace, pray for me.

" Fullness is from the fruits thereof " (20).

This most desirable spiritual fullness comes from the fruits that spring from the fear of the Lord, and that wisdom which is its consequence. What fruits are these? Surely the twelve fruits of the Spirit of God (Galatians v, 22). He that loves God, which is the first fruit, has all the others in profusion.

We should aim at this fullness, not the mere fullness of vain or worldly knowledge, still less the mere fullness of meat and drink and riches. Some only care to fill their minds with news and vain imaginations.

" She shall fill all her house with her increase and her storehouses with her treasures " (21).

The fear and love of God and wisdom are here compared to a good and fruitful wife. The soul is joined and wedded to charity, and like a good wife, she fills the house with her offspring, the rich fruits of the Holy Ghost, all the virtues. Charity is the mother of all good, and of all virtues.

O Charity, my God, fill all the house of my soul with Thy holy graces, with peace and joy, which are Thy offspring. Without Thee I am poor and miserable. I love Thee, I desire Thee, I delight in Thee. Fill my soul with Thy treasures. " I have

delighted in the way of Thy Will, as in all riches " (Ps. cxviii, 14), and I do delight in all things that testify to me Thy Will as in all riches. " The law of Thy mouth is better for me and gives me more real good than thousands of gold and silver pieces " (Ps. cxviii, 72). O Wisdom of God most high, O Charity of God, make my soul the storehouse of Thy treasures. Fill the storehouse of my soul with Thy true and really valuable treasures. I renounce and give up, as I have done by my vow of poverty, all the vain treasures of this world, and I desire Thy treasures, the treasures of wisdom and charity. Love makes me rich. For if I love Thee I possess Thee, and in Thee is all. " Incline my heart unto Thy Will and not to covetousness." Let me give my heart and all its affections to Thee, instead of loving money.

" The fear of the Lord is a crown of wisdom, filling up peace and the fruit of salvation " (22).

If we fear God with filial fear, fear to offend Him we love, fear to hurt His feelings, fear to separate ourselves from Him, our soul will be crowned with wisdom which is the brightness of eternal light. What is it that deprives us of this royal crown? Sin against God. " The crown hath fallen from my head! Woe to me, for I have sinned." O my God I hate sin, I love Thee. Grant that I may love Thee and then the beautiful crown of wisdom will be on my head.

" A crown of gold upon his head wherein is engraved Holiness, an ornament of honour, a costly work. Thou hast set on his head a crown of precious stones " (Rom. Brev. vii Resp. of One Martyr).

V
ADHERING TO GOD

Notes for a Sermon on St Dominic

1. Picture to yourself our holy Father St Dominic reverently and fervently praying before the altar or crucifix.
2. Ask God for grace to pray after his example in a holy and fervent way.

"BUT it is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God" (Ps. lxxii, 28).

How many times must St Dominic have said these words, how often he chanted them in choir, how truly they form a motto for his life. He determined in early life to adhere to God, and to God he did adhere, with his whole mind, his whole heart, all his strength, without any intermission, more and more every day increasing the union of his spirit with God, adhering more closely to Him, putting in Him alone all his hope and his joy, all his love. And he certainly found it was good for him "to adhere to God."

But what is meant by *adhering to God*?

1. To adhere to God is to believe with a most firm faith that God is the one end of man, and the fount of all good and happiness; that God is to us, therefore, a "strong city of refuge," a protector, friend and father. St Dominic firmly and practically believed this, and this faith was a lamp to his feet and a light to his path, and a shield of defence against all enemies, visible and invisible, a strong city of defence. Do I thus adhere to God?

2. To adhere to God is to trust firmly in His promises, to say with St Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him" (2 Tim. i, 12). St Dominic fully trusted in God,

and without hesitation committed his whole life to the divine care and providence, "casting all his care upon Him" (1 Peter v, 7). Never for a moment did he doubt of the power, wisdom and goodness of God, and with the apostle he could say, " I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me " (Phil. iv, 13).

Do we thus adhere to God?

3. To adhere to God means to love God as the highest and chief good above all, with the whole heart and with all the powers of the soul; it is to say to God with St Francis, " My God and my All." What words can express the force of the flames of love that burnt in the heart of St Dominic? Day and night, with ardour ever increasing, did he sigh after God, and long to be united with Him, and his lifelong prayer was for perfect charity.

Do we adhere to God by love?

4. To adhere to God is to resign ourselves in all things, prosperous and adverse, to the most holy and loving will of God, and to say with the Son of God, " My food is to do the Will of Him that sent Me " (John iv, 34). Never for one moment did St Dominic cherish within himself a will contrary to the Will of God. Whatever he had to suffer, however bitter might be the trial, he always said with the utmost generosity, " My Father if it be possible let this chalice pass from me, but nevertheless not my will but Thine be done " (Matt. xxvi, 39). On account of this perfect conformity to the Will of God, the holy man seemed not to have had any cross to bear, though he had much and many things to suffer. He bore the cross with such love that it became a light burden.

Do we adhere to God by resignation?

5. To adhere to God is to enjoy continual and intimate conversation with Him in prayer and contemplation. St Dominic so highly valued spiritual things and exercises of piety that nothing but real necessity would ever have induced him to omit, shorten or put them off.

Although weighed down by the burden of exterior occupations and labours for souls, although fatigued by journeys and preaching, he prayed continually and fervently by night and by day, and thus by prayer joined himself to God.

Do we thus adhere to God?

6. To adhere to God implies a holy familiarity with the Son of God.

Jesus dwelling in the tabernacle was the most loving friend of Dominic, beloved beyond all, in whom he fully trusted. With loving and filial simplicity he communicated to Him all his joys and sorrows; with Him he daily conversed as a son with a father, a brother with a brother, a friend with a friend. He used to be called during his lifetime "The friend of Jesus Christ." In this holy familiarity of love Dominic found a fountain of light, strength and comfort. The tabernacle was his paradise, and in this paradise he seemed to regain what Adam and Eve had before their miserable fall from God. When Dominic stood at the altar his fervour seemed to attract souls, and to fill them with faith and love.

Do we thus adhere to God?

May God grant that from this moment we may each one of us begin to experience how good it is to adhere to God and in Him alone to put all our hope.

VI
WAIT FOR HIS HANDS

"HUMBLE thyself to God, and wait for His hands" (Ecclus xiii, 9).

1. Consider what is meant by humbling myself before God. It is to remember always, and to acknowledge that He is that which is, and that I am that which is not. How can we describe His greatness? "We shall say much and yet shall want words: but the sum of our words is, He is all" (Ecclus xliii, 29).

I must then humble myself before Him in the depths of my nothingness. I must humble my mind before Him, by believing without doubting all He teaches through His Church and in His word. I must humble my will before His wise and mighty will, for we cannot distinguish between God's Will and God. If we rebel against His Will, we rebel against Him. I must humble myself to all who represent God to me, parents, superiors, priests, bishops, the Pope, lest He should say: "You have not rejected them but Me, that I should not reign over you" (1 Kings viii).

2. "Wait for His hands." In all troubles, anxieties, temptations of every kind, this is the one golden rule, "wait patiently for God," wait for His hands. "Wait for the Lord; do manfully and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord" (Ps. xxvi, 14). "Wait for the Lord and keep His way; and He will exalt thee to inherit the land"—Heaven (Ps. xxxvi, 34). When in trouble of mind, anguish of spirit, harassed with temptation after repentance, "Say not, I will return (to) evil; wait for the Lord and He will

deliver thee" (Proverbs xx, 22), but in His own time and His own way. Our duty is to wait, to wait for His hands, and that is often difficult. "Be still," that is, wait, "and see that I am God" (Ps. xlv, 11). Look back, and see how often all would have come right if only you had waited for the Lord, waited for His hands to act, instead of impatiently taking things into your own hands.

Resolve, in all that may happen to try you, in all those problems and difficulties we cannot now solve, to humble yourself profoundly before God, and to be content to wait for His hands. In all things say: "I thank Thee my God for doing Thy own Will in Thy own way, because it is Thy Will."

O my God I adore Thee, I bow down soul and body to adore Thee. Thou art so great, I am nothing. Thou art so holy, I am sinful. Thou art light, I am darkness. Thou art that which is, I am that which is not. Thou art the Creator, I am Thy creature. I bless and praise Thy holy Will, I humble myself before Thee. Thy ways are not like my ways, nor are thy thoughts like my thoughts, but as the heaven is exalted above the earth so are Thy ways above my ways, and Thy thoughts above my thoughts.

Give me grace to wait for Thee with humility, to wait for Thee with love. Grant that I may be still and see that Thou art God. Guide me with Thy hands. Support me with Thy hands. Thy hands have made me. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Here I am, O Lord; do with me whatever Thou wilt, only give me Thy holy love and true humility that I may

Humble myself to Thee
And wait for Thy hands. Amen.

VII
THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST

"THE Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world, and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice" (Wisd. i, 7).

The Holy Ghost contains all things in His immensity and knows the "voice" of all the Creation.

The work of the Holy Ghost is twofold. His work in the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, and His work as Sanctifier in each soul. We are now to deal with the latter. We must distinguish in the work of the Holy Ghost:

1. The general work of the Holy Spirit from the beginning of the world.

2. The special work since the Incarnation and the Day of Pentecost.

1. The general work as Sanctifier began at the Creation, Adam being constituted in grace. In Adam were three perfections (*a*) perfection of nature, (*b*) perfection of grace, i.e., supernatural perfection, (*c*) preternatural perfection, i.e., immortality and harmony of soul in and with itself. In him was no ignorance, for that means not knowing what we ought to know, though there was nescience.

The fall caused man to forfeit the Holy Ghost, and inflicted the four wounds, ignorance, malice, frailty lust (cf 1a, 2æ, 85).

Since the fall the Holy Ghost has assisted every soul that has come into the world; so that there never was any soul which had not sufficient grace, if it had sufficient fidelity to correspond with it, to escape eternal death. This is the foundation of the whole doctrine of grace. There are men

so narrow as to say that no soul among the heathen can be saved. The perfections of God, the attributes of mercy, love, tenderness, justice, equity, all rise up in array against so dark a theology. Scripture says (*a*) that the Son of God is the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. Every soul is illuminated by the light of God in Creation. The light of reason and of conscience is the light of God shining in the soul. The reason and conscience rightly used can see and read His existence, His glory, and His Godhead in the works of His hands.

(*b*) That "He hath set His tabernacle in the sun. He cometh forth out of the ends of Heaven and His circuit goeth to the end thereof again. There is not one that can hide himself from the heat thereof" (Ps. xviii, 6, 7), i.e., no one can hide himself from the love and from the glory of God, which fills the whole world and "containeth all things."

(*c*) That "God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim.ii, 4).

(*d*) And "We hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially of the faithful" (1 Timothy iv, 10).

Again Alexander VIII condemned as heresy "that the heathens, Jews and heretics receive no influence from Jesus Christ, but that their will is without help, i.e., grace."

Clement XI condemned as heresy "that no grace is given outside the Church." The work, therefore, of the Holy Ghost, even in the order of nature so to say, that is, outside of the Church of God and of the revealed knowledge of Jesus Christ among the heathen—that working is univer-

sal in the soul of every individual human being; and if they who receive the assistance of the Holy Ghost are faithful in corresponding with it, God in His unrevealed mercies will deal with them in ways secret from us. His mercies, unknown to us, are over all His works; and the infinite merits of the Redeemer of the world are before the mercy seat of our Heavenly Father, for the salvation of those that follow even the little light which, in the order of nature, they receive.

Any gift of God, freely given, is a grace. But grace in its more strict sense is something interior, dwelling in the soul. It is a gift of God infused into the soul, not due to nature, a perfection above nature, elevating the soul to the supernatural order and leading it to justification and eternal life. It is the presence of the Holy Ghost entering into the soul and infusing sanctity into it.

When grace is given it assumes in the reason the form of faith, in the will the form of hope, and it takes in the heart the form of charity.

Grace is the breath of the supernatural life.

2. The special work of the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier is within the bounds of the revelation of faith. God has His elect, and has always had them. From eternity He foreknew who would be saved, and He predestined them, first to grace in this world, and, through the faithful use of that grace, to glory in the world to come. God knows the number of His elect, and the world will continue till that number is complete. This does not injure our free will. All who are saved eternally will be saved by the sovereign grace of God, and by the free co-operation of their free wills; and all those who are lost eternally will be lost because, by the free resistance of their

will, they have refused to co-operate with the grace of God. But from the beginning there has been a line of elect souls.

Now what is the nature of the grace given through the Redeemer? "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and of "His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace" (St John i, 16). Adam fell and lost grace, "and that which is born of the flesh is flesh" (St John iii, 6). In the second Adam dwells the Holy Ghost, and of His fullness have we all received. "It is expedient for you that I go. For if I go not the Paraclete will not come; but if I go I will send Him to you." On the day of Pentecost He came. "My Father worketh hitherto, and now I work." In the dawn of creation the Father manifested Himself; then the Son by His Incarnation. Now we live under the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. The one great evangelical gift is the gift of the Holy Ghost (Romans viii, 15, 17). The Holy Ghost dwells in us because He descends from our Head upon all His members. We are not restored to original justice, but we are placed in a state of union with God through the Holy Ghost, like, though distinct from that which the first man received. He was in original justice, but could fall. We are united to a Head sinless and immortal, who therefore can never fall, for He is God. We have means of grace not given before, the Holy Sacraments. Over and above all the graces given before Pentecost, we have the special grace of a new dispensation. We who are born again and are members of the mystical body of Christ are under a dispensation of the Holy Ghost, so full, and of such manifold grace that there is no state of man

that is not embraced by it, and in which there is not given an abundance of grace, exceeding all measure that we can conceive, and meted out according to the necessities of each individual soul. " I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly " (St John x, 10). Upon all this grace comes the Sonship we have received. We are made sons of God by adoption.

Since this is the case:

(*a*) We ought to be habitually conscious that we are in a supernatural order. Is it not to our shame that we live all the day long as if there were no Holy Ghost? Many who have been born again resist and quench the Holy Spirit and live in the flesh, doing the deeds of the flesh. " The sensual man perceiveth not the things of the spirit of God, because they are foolishness unto Him; neither can he understand them, because they are spiritually examined." " Sensual man " means the animal man, the man of flesh and blood, of the fleshly reason and of the carnal will without the Spirit of God. The Spiritual man is the man who follows the spirit of his baptism either by innocence or penance, and, living in holy fear purifies himself, asking the Holy Ghost to sanctify him.

(*b*) We ought to co-operate generously and faithfully with the Will of the Holy Spirit that is working in us.

(*c*) We ought to be specially devout to the Holy Ghost. He is our guide, our foster father, our friend, our counsellor.

Beware of those three degrees of disobedience to the Holy Spirit: (*a*) " Grieve not the Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of Redemption " (Eph. iv, 30). (*b*) " Resist not the

Spirit" (Acts vii, 51). (*c*) "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. v, 19). Beware also of lukewarmness, for nothing more provokes the Holy Spirit of God than the lukewarmness with which we allow His graces and mercies to pass by us unperceived.

"We are confident of this very thing that He who hath begun the good work in you will perfect the same unto the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. i, 6).

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit" (Eph. iv, 30).

Man always makes an excuse to himself for sin. It may be a bad one, but still an excuse there must be, for his reason requires it. He is not a mere animal, led by instinct only, he must have a reason for what he does. When he wants to sin, therefore, he frames some kind of reason to himself to account for his sin, to excuse it to himself. When he desires to follow his own way and to sin, he fashions for himself some excuse, some reason, some plea to justify his conduct to himself. He must act on some kind of rule and principle, else he is vexed with himself.

Sometimes he says to himself, "others do as bad as I; others assert that they cannot help sinning; others say to themselves it is only a venial sin; a venial sin after all is nothing compared to a mortal sin, God can easily forgive and it does not deprive me of grace, it cannot cast me into hell."

A habit of venial sin tempts God. "And neither let us tempt Christ as some of them tempted and were destroyed by the serpents." How does it tempt God? It tempts Him to take away His grace in the time of temptation. We stand, if we stand in God's grace, by the power and goodness of God, not by our own strength. If He were to

withdraw from us we should fall, fall terribly, fall ignominiously, fall irretrievably. There is no sin so bad that we should not do it if left to the weakness of our nature, the darkness of our minds, the malice of our hearts, the lust of our passions.

VIII
JOY

"The fruit of the Spirit is joy."

1. Let us hear our Lord saying, "Rejoice and be glad."
2. Ask Him to grant us true joy that no man can take away.

1. NATURE of Christian joy.

St Thomas defines joy as the fruit or effect of love on account of the presence of a good that is loved.

There are five sources of joy, three to be carefully avoided; one that is good but very imperfect; one that is true, solid and lasting and within the power of all.

(*a*) Joy that is diabolical, to rejoice at sin and iniquity.

(*b*) Joy that is carnal and produced by mere sensual pleasure.

(*c*) Joy that is worldly for some vain thing.

(*d*) Joy that is true but only human, as a poet rejoices in verses; natural beauty, friendship, etc., intellectual pleasure that is derived from the solution of a problem, etc.

(*e*) Joy in the Lord, on account of some holy thing, e.g., the conversion of a soul, etc.

The first three, diabolical, carnal and worldly joy, we should hate; not only are they unable to produce happiness, but they must bring misery. They produce a passing joy ending in bitterness.

Joy that is merely human and natural, though not bad, is not worth much; it passes quickly. It is often accompanied or followed by bitterness.

> Pleasures are like poppies spread;
> You seize the flower, the bloom is shed.

Therefore joy in the Lord, joy which is the fruit of the Spirit, is the only true and solid one, the only one that can last, the joy we should strive after. " Your joy no man taketh from you " (St John xvi, 22).

How can we attain to this true joy?

1. St Thomas says, " Joy is caused by love," and, therefore, to have it we must love God; a state of grace is the necessary condition. No one has real joy while in a state of mortal sin. Human, worldly, sensual and diabolical joy can be indulged in while in sin, but not the pure and lovely joy in the Lord.

2. St Thomas says that joy is caused by love on account of the presence of the good that is loved. The " good loved " in true joy is, without doubt, God Himself. To possess this, therefore, we must have God present. God is, of course, everywhere present, but the presence necessary for joy is the realization of His holy presence.

There are various ways of practising the presence of God, and they all give joy.

(*a*) By mind and heart to apprehend God, by often making acts of faith, hope and charity, by often thinking of His presence and visiting the Blessed Sacrament.

(*b*) By uniting our wills to the Will of God and obeying lawful authority.

(*c*) By uniting our actions to those of God, by doing our duty faithfully to please Him.

(*d*) By uniting our zeal to that of God's Son, by labouring earnestly for souls.

(*e*) By uniting our sorrows to those of Jesus Christ, bearing our troubles patiently, willingly and lovingly after the example of our Lord.

2. The joy of the Lord gives numberless pleasures to those who possess it. Some are small, some great, all desirable.

Among the small are:

(*a*) Those of which the material object is a visible creature.

For those in grace and with a pure intention is it not a joy in the Lord to see His works: the sky and stars, gardens and flowers, lovely objects of nature and art? To hear music, the birds, etc.; to have rest, well earned by labour for God; lawful recreation.

(*b*) Again, success in good works; approval of those we love and respect.

Among the great are:

(*a*) Testimony of a good conscience, the Holy Ghost testifying to us that we are the Sons of God, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

(*b*) Peace of soul. " Peace is the mind's rest, the soul's stillness, simplicity of heart, the fetters of love," says St Augustine.

(*c*) Duties of our state done in a spirit of faith and love.

(*d*) Holy familiarity with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

(*e*) Singular love to our Lady. What joy this was to the saints !

(*f*) The greatest and best source of joy is to be " all for God," to labour for Him, to suffer fatigue for Him and for souls, to die for Him,

to become a victim of love for Him and for souls.

Labour thus till you hear, " Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord " (Matt. xxv, 21).

" I bring you tidings of great joy " (Luke ii, 10). " No chastisement for the present seemeth to bring with it joy " (Heb. xii, 11). But it does hereafter.

" Believing, you shall rejoice with an unspeakable joy " (1 Pet. i, 8).

" Father, he gave joy " (Tob. xii, 3).

" Joy be ever with you " (Tob. v, 11).

" They shall receive double . . . everlasting joy shall be unto them " (Isa. lxi, 7).

" With the joy of the whole earth is Mount Sion (The Church) founded " (Ps. xlvii, 2).

" The city of perfect beauty, the joy of the whole earth " (The Church).

" Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads " (Isa. xxxv, 10).

" Be glad and rejoice for your reward is great in heaven " (Luke vi, 23).

" These things have I spoken, that My joy may be with you, and your joy may be filled " (John xv, 11).

> And what I saw was equal ecstasy
> One universal smile it seemed of all things.
> Joy past compare: gladness unutterable.
> Imperishable life of peace and love,
> Exhaustless riches and immeasurable bliss.
>
> *Dante.*

IX

CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S MERCY AND PROVIDENCE

1. On what should our confidence in God be founded?

(*a*) On His infinite power. "God is able to make all grace abound in you" (2 Cor. ix, 8).

God is able to make us, even us sinners, to abound in every grace and in every good work. To increase our confidence in God's power, we should reflect on the manifestations of it in (1) creation, (2) conservation, (3) redemption. If you are in difficulties, trust. "How shall we be able to stand before their face, unless Thou, O God, help us" (1 Mach. iii, 53).

(*b*) On His incomprehensible wisdom. If God seems not to use His power to help you, remember His wisdom, which sees everything, and knows the time and means that are best. An emperor gave a banquet on a ship; whenever the silver plates were changed, they were thrown into the sea. The guests were amazed at the extravagance. In reality the vessel was surrounded with nets, so that all that was thrown overboard could be taken up afterwards. God compares His providence to a net (Ezech. xii, 13; xvii, 20; xix, 8). So not seeing this net, we often think all is lost, but we must wait and trust.

(*c*) On God's unspeakable goodness. You may say, I could trust in God if I were good, but I have sinned and do sin. Ps. iv says, "Offer to God a sacrifice of justice and hope in Him." But Ps. l, 19, says, "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit." Repent, and however enormous your crimes have been, you can and ought to confide,

for the ground of trust is His mercy and goodness, not your virtue or goodness.

2. We err in matter of confidence.

(*a*) When we do not place our confidence in God alone (Jer. xvii, 5). Our whole confidence must be in Him, not in others, nor in ourselves. Look at nature, which is the work of God. How perfect! " And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe; how much more you, O ye of little faith " (St Matt. vi, 30).

(*b*) When we do not trust from the beginning. We wait till the world has played us false. St Martin, surrounded with flames, ran first to the door to escape, and not being able to open it cried to God and was wonderfully delivered. He blamed himself then for not flying at once to God. A woman in Normandy, says F. Le Jeune, went up to some Fathers of his congregation and asked whether she had sinned because when, on Corpus Christi, she was going to the Church and saw two wolves, she turned back in fright, but reflecting on the confidence she ought to repose in God, she returned and said, " Wolves, created by God, allow me to pass to the Church." They allowed her. She feared she had sinned by diffidence. How much we might do, did we trust in God. "Woe to them that are faint-hearted, who believe not God, and therefore they shall not be protected by Him " (Ecclus ii, 15).

(*c*) When we do not firmly trust to the end. St Peter with confidence went out on the water, but began to sink when he began to lose confidence (St Matt. xiv, 28).

Give me a soul that trusts entirely in God, in

God alone, and not at all in self, and it will work miracles.

If we trust a director, do we not follow his will? Do we trust God when we are unjust in order to gain money, etc., if we fear to spare time to pray, etc.?

3. Hence we have not special helps from God. *Proved by:*

a. St Mark vi. He could not do many miracles there because of their unbelief. Where? in Nazareth, where the Word had become Flesh. He could not. Who? God! Why?

b. Our Lord said to Saint Gertrude: "My daughter, when a soul places all her trust in Me alone, believing, without any doubt, that I can and will succour her faithfully, this virtue is so agreeable to Me, that it pierces My Heart and does Me a kind of violence: for if on the one hand I would defer the answer, from My delight to see her trust in Me and so merit; on the other, I fain must help her on account of her complete confidence."

c. No one likes to be mistrusted; even a servant is more faithful if trusted. Can God like to be distrusted?

d. If a child trusts itself entirely to a father, will not the father do his utmost to protect that child and for its happiness? "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thy own prudence:

"In all thy ways think on Him, and He will direct thy steps" (Prov. iii, 5, 6).

X
GRATITUDE

We may be ungrateful in two ways.

1. By omission only, because that is, we fail (*a*) to acknowledge a benefit, or (*b*) to praise the benefactor, or (*c*) to make a return, and to be thus ungrateful is a venial sin, because it springs from negligence or from want of disposition for virtue. But it might possibly be mortal, on account of interior contempt, or when a good office is obligatory and yet omitted.

2. By not only neglecting to show gratitude, but by also acting against the person, returning evil for good, blaming his good offices and kindnesses and considering his benefits injuries.

This may be venial or mortal.

There are three duties of gratitude:

1. To acknowledge the benefit received.
2. To praise and give thanks to the benefactor.
3. To return the favour by good offices.

There are three acts of ingratitude:

1. Not to return a benefit.
2. To pretend that no benefit has been received.
3. And, worst of all, not even to acknowledge a favour.

And the contrary acts are three:

1. To return evil for good.
2. To despise and think lightly of the benefit.
3. To consider a benefit an injury.

In every sin there is a material ingratitude to God, but there is formal ingratitude when a benefit of God is actually and wilfully despised. In this last case the ingratitude is a distinct sin.

In God's benefits we should consider:

1. The infinite greatness of the benefactor, " I will extol Thee, O God my King, and I will bless Thy name for ever, yea for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: and of His greatness there is no end " (Ps. cxliv, 1–3).

2. The infinite love with which He gives benefits.

3. The greatness of the benefits themselves.

4. The infinite baseness of the recipient: " Who am I that I presume to praise Thee? I am dust and ashes, a dead and stinking carcass, worms and rottenness; how shall darkness praise light, death life, and a worm his Infinite Creator? " (St Augustine in *Soliloquy*, chap. x).

5. The infinite liberality of God in His free and gratuitous favours in spite of sin. These five things are contained in the words of our Lord: " For God so loved the world as to give His Only Begotten Son " (St John iii, 16).

1. God
2. so loved
4. the world
5. as to give
3. His Only Begotten Son.

XI

THANKSGIVING

" In all things give thanks, for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all " (1 Thess. v, 18).

In his epistles St Paul continually speaks of the duty of giving thanks. In all his epistles he himself gives thanks to God, as in this one to the Christians

of Thessalonica, saying in the second verse: " We give thanks always for you all," and in the second letter he wrote to them: " We are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren." And in the words of the text he seems to give us the rule for thanksgiving, and it is a very general and comprehensive one. In fact, more general, more comprehensive it could not be. " In all things give thanks." Nothing is omitted. Note in particular that he does not say, " In all pleasant things," " In prosperity," or " In comfort," but quite universally, " In all things"—emphatically, " in all." The first idea that we might have without much reflection would be to thank God when things are according to our own mind. Of course, we ought to thank God then. We should, indeed, be ungrateful wretches if we did not. If we, or those we love are ill, and we ask for the temporal blessing of health, and it is restored, if we do not sing the praises of God, we should be indeed guilty of ingratitude. But if we thank the good and loving God only in prosperity, we evidently do not fulfil St Paul's desire, we do not observe the rule he here lays down, " In all things give thanks "—that is, in illness as well as health, in loss as well as gain, in the time of clouds as well as in sunshine, in danger as well as safety, when persecuted and despised, as well as when in honour.

Many people would reply to this by saying, " This is all very well for the Saints, but it is much too high for us. We cannot possibly thank God for trials, crosses, illness, contempt." But is this St Paul's teaching? Is he speaking to a select few? His words, on the contrary, are: " For this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all."

That you should give thanks in all things he declares to be the Will of God for all. " For you all," he says. When he says " the Will of God in Christ Jesus," the meaning is, His Will manifested by Jesus Christ, His Will made known by the teaching and the example of Jesus Christ, and lastly, His Will for all those who are members of Christ, in other words, for all Christians.

You see, then, how wide and far stretching the Apostolic rule is. St Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost, declares positively and clearly that it is God's Will that all of us should give thanks for all things.

Union with God means union with His Will. If we prefer His will to our own, we prefer Him to ourselves. Now the will of God is that in all things we give thanks. If we thank Him only for things we like, that is for things in accordance with our own will, we are thanking Him for doing our own will. If we are ill and ask for health, and it is granted, when we thank God, it is for doing our will. We have got what we desired, and we say devoutly, Thanks be to God; that is, " I thank Thee, O my God, for doing my will in my way, because it pleases me." That is self will. But when our desire for health is not gratified, and God answers our prayer by giving us grace to bear our pains with patience in union with His sufferings on the Cross, if then we say with holy joy *Deo gratias*, or " Glory be to God," this is really to say: " I thank Thee, O God, for doing Thy own Will in Thy own way, because it is Thy Will." This is divine love. For this we need the grace of God, for which we should constantly ask.

This Apostolic teaching was not new. The Holy

Ghost had taught it in the Old Testament. For instance in Ps. xxxiii He inspired these words: " I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be always in my mouth." " I will bless Him," must be our firm determination at all times, not merely in times of prosperity, but when the cross of adversity is pressing heavily, not only when He does my will to please me, but when He does His own Will, though it does not naturally please me. His praise, I resolve, shall be in future always in my mouth, in times of darkness, as well as in light. In order to have His praise always in my mouth, it must first be in my heart, for " out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

To thank God in suffering is far better than merely to say, in perhaps a surly spirit, " God's Will be done." This may mean, " What can't be cured must be endured." We may mean nothing more than the familiar expression, " Grin and bear it." But a Christian should rise far above this, and welcome God's Will in the way He wills, because He wills it, and he should sing the praises of God, thanking Him for doing His own Will in His own way, because it is His Will.

" Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God the Father " (Eph. v, 19, 20).

This, it is important to understand, is the real and unmistakable exercise of the love of God. In this there is no possible danger of delusion or self-deceit. We cannot repeat to ourselves too often, or realize too deeply that to love God's Will is to love God, and to be united to God means to be united to His Will. Therefore to thank Him for

doing His own Will, and not ours, is an act of genuine love to God. To do this in times of suffering is one of the most certain proofs that we really love God.

St John Chrysostom, in every trouble and pain, accustomed himself always to say with joyful will, however sad and dark the lower part of his soul might be, "Glory be to God." Thus he sang and made sweet melody in his heart, giving thanks always for all things. St Elizabeth of Hungary, when cast out of house and home, and obliged with her children to take refuge in a farm building meant for swine, went to a Franciscan Friary, and, calling the Fathers together, asked them to chant the Te Deum to God for doing His own Will, thus fulfilling the words, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall be always in my mouth." This is holiness and union with God.

We must not as Christians be content with admiring this; we must set to work vigorously to imitate it. Many things the Saints did we cannot accomplish, because God does not will us to attempt them, but this, by God's grace, we can do. Resolve, then, in all things you do not like, to say, fervently and constantly, "I thank Thee, O Lord, for doing Thy own Will, in Thy own way, because it is Thy Will." This will be sweet melody in the ears of God.

XII

PSALM LXII

THIS Psalm, so often used by the Church, is the loving aspiration of the soul desiring union with God.

When was it written? The title in the Bible says, "A Psalm of David, when he was in the

desert of Edom," which is in the south of Palestine. David was here when flying from Saul (see 1 Kings, xxii 5). But he was not then king, and in this Psalm he calls himself the king (see verse 12).

So it seems better to refer it to the time in which he was flying from Absalom (see 2 Kings xv). Then (verse 23) he " went over the brook Cedron," and " marched towards the way that looketh to the desert. And in verse 28 he says, " Behold I will lie hid in the plains of the wilderness."

In the Apostolic Constitutions it is prescribed that this Psalm should be sung daily in the Church, and to this day it always forms part of Lauds, and is always recited in the Office of the Dead. In the Greek Church St John Chrysostom tells us, " That it was decreed and ordained by the primitive Fathers that no day should pass without the public singing of this Psalm, and in another place the same Father declares that, "The spirit and soul of the whole book of Psalms seems to be condensed in this Psalm."

1. " O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day:

For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh longeth, O how exceedingly!"

In his sorrow and humiliation he turned to God. His whole soul sought Him earnestly, and early in the morning, as the sun began to appear in the desert, like the face of God, shining on him and turning darkness into light, night into day, sorrow into gladness, he sighs after Him. My soul thirsteth after Thee, O God, my own God, who art the "Fountain of Life" (Ps. xxxv, 10). Who alone can quench my thirst. For Thee my flesh longeth, with intense desire. My whole being, soul

and body, desires Thee, longs after, cannot be satisfied without Thee.

What a loving desire is here expressed! Do I thus thirst after God? Do I long for union with Him? As a Christian and a religious I ought to have this thirst. I shall be blessed if my body hungers and my soul thirsts after the living God. To do this I must think of Him continually and strive to do and love His Will. To desire His Will is to desire Him.

Ye that thirst come to the waters; draw waters of grace with joy from the fountains of the Saviour; from His wounds; His Sacraments; and from loving conversation with Him.

(2) " In a desert and pathless land where no water is." David was in the desert, driven from his home, and far from the holy hill of Sion and the Tabernacle of God. The place he was in suggested this verse. As I am in a desert without a path and where there is no refreshing water, so is my soul on this earth. Here I am in a desert, compared to Heaven, with no clearly defined path, and without the refreshing means of grace.

O my God, this earth is to me a desert without Thee. It is a valley of tears. In it there is no path or way but Thou, O Lord, who hast said, " I am the Way." " Lead me, O Lord, in Thy Way " (Ps. lxxxv, 11); " Lead me in the way of Thy commandments " (Ps. cxviii, 35).

There is no water that will quench my thirst, except from Thy fountains (Isa. xii), O blessed Saviour. Thou hast said, " He that shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall not thirst for ever, but the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing

up into life everlasting" (St John iv, 13). Lord Jesus, give me this water. No longer then shall I, poor soul, be in a dry and weary land where no water is, for Thou art the Way and the Life.

"So have I come before Thee in Thy holy place,
That I might see Thy Power and Thy glory."

"So," that is, with the same ardent desire for union with Thee that I now have, I formerly came before Thee in Thy holy place, that I might see there Thy power and Thy glory or beauty. (1 Kings iv, 21).

O Lord, in Thy holy place of old was only the Ark, which was the "glory of Israel," and the figure of Thy Power. Now, in the holy place, in the true sanctuary, I have Thee really present. Give me grace to delight to come before Thee in Thy holy place, to see thy power and glory, hidden in the Blessed Sacrament.

(3) "Thy mercy is better than life:
My lips shall praise Thee."

Thy mercy and loving kindness, O Lord, is the best thing in life, yea far better than life itself without Thee. Thy loving kindness makes life happy; rather let me lose my life than lose Thy mercy and be deprived of Thy love. I will praise and thank Thee for Thy mercy.

(4) "Thus will I bless Thee all my life long:
I will lift up my hands in Thy name."

"Thus," with the fullness of a grateful heart, O Lord, will I praise Thee, all my life long. In all things will I thank Thee. "Thy praise shall be ever in my mouth" (Ps. xxxiii, 1). I will bless Thee, O Lord, at all times. Not only in times of prosperity, but likewise in times of temptation

and distress. I will always lift up my hands, as a suppliant, to call upon Thy name, that is, upon Thyself, O my God. Never will I cease to thank Thee and to call upon Thee.

(5) "Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness:
And my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips."

As the soul is satisfied at a banquet, with "a feast of fat things," so fill my soul with the food of Thy grace.

"The poor shall eat and shall be filled,
And they that seek the Lord shall praise Him.
Their hearts shall live for ever and ever" (Ps. xxi, 27) (see Isa. lv, 1).

Yea, Lord, I will praise Thee with joyful lips.

(6) "If," that is when, "I remember Thee upon my bed":

"On Thee will I meditate in the morning:

(7) "Because Thou hast been my helper."

When I remember Thee, O Lord, in the silence of the night, I will praise Thee.

I resolve and determine every morning to meditate on Thee, to think of Thee, and to pray toThee, for Thou hast ever helped me, and I trust in Thee my helper.

Am I faithful and fervent in mental prayer every morning? How often have I said, "In the morning I will meditate on Thee"? Do I carry out my purpose?

(8) "In the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice;
"My soul hath cleaved unto Thee;
"Thy right hand hath upheld me."

If, as St John Chrysostom says, this Psalm contains the spirit of the whole Psalter, this verse

may be rightly said to express the whole essence of this Psalm.

Though I am in a desert land, without path and without water, still, O Lord God, under the shadow of Thy wings do I rejoice. As long as I am sheltered under Thy care what can I fear? Though in dryness and weariness, in suffering and temptation, with Thee am I safe, under the shadow of Thy wings I rest in peace.

" Keep me as the apple of Thy eye. Protect me under the shadow of Thy wings " (Ps. xvi, 9, 10).

" My soul hath cleaved unto Thee."

The soul cleaves to God, holds fast to Him, by true charity. Every act of love makes the soul to cleave more firmly to Him. " O Truth, my God, make me one with Thee in everlasting charity."

" It is good for me to hold fast unto my God: To put my hope in the Lord my God " (Ps. lxxii, 28).

I resolve, O my God, to cleave unto Thee, and I will make ceaseless acts of love unto Thee, for " Thy right hand hath upheld me." If it had not, O Lord, long since should I have fallen.

(9) " But they have sought my soul in vain:
They shall go into the lower parts of the earth:
(10) They shall be delivered to the power of the sword:
They shall be a portion for foxes."

Under the shadow of God's wings I am safe from my spiritual enemies, the devils. They have sought my soul, but in vain. They will go down discomfited into hell and shall be punished by the sword of God's justice. " They shall become the prey of jackals," a figure suggested by these animals in the desert. It may denote the utter defeat of our spiritual enemies.

(11) "But the king shall rejoice in God;
All that swear by Him shall be praised;
For the mouth of them that speak wicked things shall be stopped."

David foretells his triumph and that he will rejoice in God; every one that swears by Him, that is, all who revere Him with religious awe, shall be praised, and the mouth of the sinner shall be closed.

XIII
NOTES ON ISAIAS

"As He hath taught me, with a strong hand" (Isaias viii, 11).

We may consider the Divine hand in three ways.

1. As the hand of divine power.

(*a*) Creating us and all things. "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me wholly" (Job x, 8).

(*b*) Containing all things. "In Thy hand, O Lord, are all the ends of the earth" (Ps. xciv, 4).

(*c*) Protecting us. "In the shadow of His hand He hath protected me" (Isaias xlix, 2).

2. The hand of God is the hand of justice.

(*a*) Touching us by trials in order to prove us. "The hand of the Lord hath touched me" (Job xix, 21).

(*b*) Scourging us by sufferings in order to purify us. "Though, for the present time, I should be delivered from the punishments of men, yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty, neither alive nor dead" (2 Mach. vi, 26).

(*c*) Pressing upon us for punishment. "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x, 31).

3. The hand of God is the hand of Mercy.

(*a*) Healing us. "He woundeth and cureth; He striketh, and His hands shall heal" (Job v, 18).

(*b*) Feeding us. "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (Ps. xciv, 7, Ps. xxii, 1).

(*c*) Crowning us at the end. "They shall receive a kingdom of glory, and a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord" (Wis. v, 17).

Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit
Thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth.

"A child is born to us" (Isa. ix, 6).

Christ Jesus is called a child, or "a little one,"

1. Because at His birth He really humbled Himself to be a child, a little one (*Parvulus*); "And entering into the house they found the child with Mary His mother" (Matt. ii, 11).

2. Because the poverty He chose made Him little like a child in this world. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich He became poor for your sakes; that through His poverty you might become rich" (II Cor. vii, 9).

3. He became a little one by Humility, like a child. "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi, 29).

4. He became a little one by His death, on account of the humiliation of the death of the Cross. "Let us condemn him to a most shameful death" (Wis. ii, 20; Jer. xi, 19).

"A son is given to us" (Isa. ix, 16).

Christ has been given to us:

1. As a brother. "Who shall give Thee to me for my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother?" (Cant. viii, 1).

2. As a teacher. "Rejoice, O children of Sion, and be joyful in the Lord your God; because He hath given you a teacher of justice."

3. As a watchman. " So Thou, O Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel " (Ezech. xxxiii, 7).

4. As a defender. " They shall cry to the Lord .... and He shall send them a Saviour and defender to deliver them " (Isa. xix, 20).

5. As a shepherd. " And I will set up one shepherd over them, and He shall feed them " (Ezech. xxxiv, 23; St John x, 11).

6. As a practical example. " For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also " (John xiii, 15).

7. As the food of our pilgrimage. " The Bread which I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world " (John vi, 52).

8. As the price of redemption. " The son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many " (Matt. xx, 28).

9. As the future reward. " To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna" (Apoc. ii, 17).

" The government is on His shoulder " (Isa. ix, 6).

God has placed on the shoulder of Christ:

1. Sins that He might expiate them. " The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all " (Isa. liii, 6).

2. The key, as upon a priest. "I will lay the key of the house of David upon His shoulder; and He shall open and none shall shut; and He shall shut and none shall open " (Isa. xxii, 22).

3. Principality, as on the lord and ruler of all. " The government is on His shoulder."

4. Glory, as on one that triumphs over all His enemies. " They shall hang upon Him all the glory of His Father's house " (Isa. xxii, 24).

"His name shall be called Emmanuel" (Isa. vii).

Emmanuel means "God with us," and on this text we should consider that Christ is with us in many ways.

1. As our brother, having assumed our nature. "Who shall give thee to me for my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find thee without, and kiss thee" (Cant. viii, 1).

2. As our spouse, through the bond of love. "If any one loveth Me he will keep My word" (John xiv, 23).

3. As our shepherd, through the comfort of maternal sympathy. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any one shall hear my voice and open to Me the door, I will enter in and will sup with him" (Apoc. iii, 20).

4. As our Saviour, through the help by which He protects us. "Therefore, fear thou not, my servant Jacob, saith the Lord, neither be dismayed, O Israel; for behold I will save thee from a country afar off" (Jer. xxx, 10).

5. As our leader, through the example of good works. "The Lord only was His leader."

"He shall not cry out" (Isa. xlii, 2).

God is here showing the meekness and humility of Jesus Christ, whom He calls His "servant" according to His manhood, whom "I will uphold" by the grace of the hypostatical union; and His "Elect," chosen to be the Head of the Church. "He shall not cry out" is true of His meekness, not crying out against His enemies. "Jesus was silent," not crying out to His father for ten legions of angels, not crying out for fire to descend on the ungrateful city that rejected Him.

But there are other ways in which our Lord did cry out:

1. With the cry of devout and earnest prayer. "Who, in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications . . . . was heard for His reverence" (Heb. v, 7).

2. With the cry of earnest preaching. "And on the last and great day of the festival, Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink" (John vii, 37).

3. With the cry of anxious expectation. "I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes" (Isa. v, 2).

"I will turn rivers into islands, and I will dry up the standing pools" (Isa. xlii, 15).

The water of rivers and pools forms a lively image of the spiritual effect of grace and heavenly comfort to the parched and thirsty soul. When the waters of doctrine and consolation are dried up as a penance for infidelity to grace, "The needy and the poor seek for waters and there are none; their tongue hath been dry with thirst" (Isa. xli, 17). There are many kinds of spiritual water, all of which in punishment for sin may be "turned into islands and dried up." For,

1. There is the water of contrite and loving tears. "Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes (Jer. ix, 1).

2. There is the water of baptismal purity. "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John, iii, 5).

3. There is the water of spiritual grace. "He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, out of

his belly shall flow rivers of running water" (John vii, 38).

4. There is the water of divine wisdom. "I, Wisdom, have poured out rivers. . . . I will water my garden of plants, and I will water abundantly the fruits of my meadow" (Ecclus xxiv, 40).

5. There is the water of interior joy. "Drink water out of thy own cistern, and the streams of thy own well" (Prov. v, 15; Isa. xii, 3).

"I have given Thee for a covenant of the people" (Isa. xlii, 6).

Christ Jesus, our Lord, is given to us as a covenant made with us by the Eternal Father, in more ways than one, and they are worthy of deep consideration.

1. As a covenant and pledge of salvation by which we shall be saved from destruction. "I will set My bow in the clouds, and it shall be the sign of a covenant between Me and between the earth" (Gen. ix, 13).

2. As the covenant of a promise fulfilled. "For all the promises of God are in Him, It is" (2 Cor. i, 20).

3. As the covenant of divine love to us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting" (John iii, 16).

4. As a covenant and pledge that the law of Moses would cease to bind. "Burnt offering and sin offering Thou didst not require, then said I, behold, I come" (Ps. xxxix, 7).

"Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and formed thee, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, and called thee by thy name: thou art Mine. When thou shalt pass through the waters I will be with thee, and the rivers shall not cover thee" (Isa. xliii, 1, 2).

God thus encourages the humbled soul, by showing the benefits of His love. "I created thee," making and beginning your substance, and "formed thee," bestowing your form and shape on thee (Gen. ii, 7). "I have redeemed thee" from evils (Osee xiii, 14) and "called thee" to grace (Osee ii, 24). After thus encouraging the depressed soul by the memory of past blessings, the gracious God goes on to promise His protection; "When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee."

God delivers our souls from many waters:

1. Of unlawful pleasure. "Stolen waters are sweeter, and hidden bread is more pleasant" (Prov. ix, 17). In these waters are men drowned by impurity.

2. Of covetous desire, and in these waters men are overwhelmed by avarice, like Pharao and his host in the Red Sea. "They sunk as lead in the mighty waters" (Exod. xv, 10).

3. Of trial and affliction. "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto my soul" (Ps. lxviii, 1). In these waters men are lost through impatience.

4. Of worldly power. "The waters on which the harlot sat" (Apoc. xviii, 15), in which men are suffocated by pride.

From these pernicious waters of impurity, avarice, impatience and pride, do Thou, O Lord,

who created me and formed me, who hast redeemed me and called me by my name, deliver me. I am thine, save me, O Lord.

"When thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, and the flames shall not burn thee" (Isa. xliii, 2).

Not only from the hateful waters of sin will our Lord deliver us, but from various kinds of devouring fire.

1. The fire of fleshly temptation, of which Job says, "It is a fire that devoureth even to destruction" (xxxi, 12), and those given to impurity burn with this fire, and therefore St Paul writes, "It is better to marry than to be burnt" (1 Cor. vii, 9).

2. The fire of temporal affliction and trial. "Thou hast proved my heart, and visited it by night; Thou hast tried me by fire and iniquity hath not been found in me" (Ps. xvi, 3). In this fire the impatient are consumed. "Their countenances shall be as faces burnt" (Isa. xiii, 8).

3. The fire of eternal damnation. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," and into this fire the impenitent will fall. "The flame burnt the wicked" (Ps. cv, 18).

4. The fire of the divine wrath. "A fire is kindled in my wrath" (Deut. xxxii, 22), and this fire will in an especial manner torment the proud. "The fire kindled in my wrath . . . shall burn the foundations of the mountains" (Deut. xxxii, 22).

O gracious God, who hath created and formed me, redeemed and called me, whose I am, quench the fierce burnings of the fires of lust and impa-

tience, that I may never burn in the fire of hell nor be consumed by Thy wrath, for Thou, O God, art a consuming fire. Amen.

"Put Me in remembrance and let us plead together" (Isa. xliii, 26).

Think, my son, what I, the Almighty God, have done for thee; let us plead together and see if you have reason to treat me as you have treated me!

We ought to "put God in remembrance":

1. By recalling the wonderful things He has done, in order to reverence Him. "Remember His marvellous works which He hath done" (Ps. civ, 5).

2. By recalling to mind the benefits He has bestowed upon us, to increase in gratitude and thanksgiving. "I remembered Thy mercy, O Lord, and Thy works which are from the beginning of the world. How Thou deliverest them that wait for Thee, O Lord, and savest them out of the hands of the nations" (Ecclus li, 11, 12).

3. By calling to mind and meditating on the torments He has endured in His Passion, to compassionate Him. "Remember My poverty . . . the wormwood and the gall" (Lam. iii, 19).

4. By calling to mind the commands He has given to observe them carefully, "Mindful of His commandments to do them" (Ps. cii, 18).

"I will pour out My Spirit" (Isa. xliv, 3).

The Spirit of God is bestowed on beginners, the proficient and the perfect, that is, on those in the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways of the spiritual life, but in different manners.

1. To beginners.

(*a*) In the moment they are called to a better

life. " Behold, I will send My Spirit into you and you shall live " (Ezec. xxxvii, 5).

(*b*) In the laver of regeneration, in Baptism. " By the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom He hath poured forth on us abundantly " (Titus iii, 5, 6).

(*c*) In the privilege of adoption. " You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father " (Rom. viii, 15).

2. To the more advanced.

(*a*) To instruct the mind. " The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things " (John xv, 26).

(*b*) To fill the will with affections of love. " My Spirit is sweet above honey " (Ecclus xxiv, 27).

(*c*) To help them to perform good works. " The Spirit helpeth our weakness " (Rom. viii, 26).

3. To the perfect, in the unitive way:

(*a*) Bestowing on them the benefit of liberty, that is, detachment. " Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty " (2 Cor. iii, 17).

(*b*) As the bond of unity. " Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace " (Eph. iv, 3).

(*c*) As the pledge of our supernatural inheritance. " You were signed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance " (Eph. i, 13, 14).

" Israel, My elect " (Isa. xlv, 4).

Israel represents the Saints of God who are His elect:

1. By predestination, by which He first chose them freely. " He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world " (Eph. i, 4).

2. They have been formed by the pouring in of grace. " The Lord God formed man . . . and breathed into his face the breath of life " (Gen. ii, 7).

3. They are chosen to be righteous through love. " The righteous love thee " (Cant. i, 3).

4. They are chosen to be servants by the duty of good works. " We are unprofitable servants " (Luke, xvii, 10).

" Your burdens of heavy weight " (Isa. xlvi, 1).

Consider on these words that there is no burden of more heavy weight than sin. Sin fatigues the soul of man in many ways.

1. In the anxiety caused by planning evil. " They sleep not unless they have done evil " (Prov. iv, 16).

2. On account of the labour of putting evil into execution. " We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity " (Wis. v, 7).

3. From the confusion and shame that arises from the remembrance of past iniquity. " What fruit, therefore, had you then in those things of which you are now ashamed ?" (Rom. vi, 21).

4. Because no fruit can be expected from wickedness. " When the wicked man is dead, there shall be no hope any more, and the expectation of the solicitous shall perish."

O gracious and holy Lord, give me the grace to lay down the grievous burden of sin which oppresses me with its heavy weight, and to take upon me Thy burden that is light and Thy yoke which is sweet. Amen.

"Return, ye transgressors, to the heart" (Isa. xlvi, 8).

This exhortation of the prophet to us who have wandered abroad by sin to return to the heart may be considered in various practical ways.

For sinful man should "return to the heart":

1. As to the seat of the judge, to examine himself. "I meditated in the night with my own heart, and I was exercised and swept my spirit" (Ps. lxxvi, 7).

2. As to the principle of spiritual life to preserve himself in life. "With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it" (Prov. iv, 23).

3. As to the audience chamber of the divine Word, that he may diligently listen to the voice of God. "I will lead her into the wilderness and I will speak to her heart" (Osee ii, 14).

4. As to the treasure house of the divine words, that he may keep himself from evil. "Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee" (Ps. cxviii, 11).

5. As to the supper chamber of divine peace and refreshment, the opposite of which is condemned in those words of the Psalm, "They speak peace with their neighbour, but evils are in their hearts" (Ps. xxvii, 3).

"I have chosen thee in the furnace of poverty" (Isa. xlviii, 10).

I have chosen thee, that is, purifying thee in the furnace of poverty. Poverty is a furnace which causes suffering, but it confers on those who willingly endure its flames many and great benefits.

1. It makes men acknowledge their sins.

2. It tends to preserve virtue. "The poor man

is glorified by his discipline and fear" (Ecclus x, 33).

3. It preserves tranquillity of spirit. "Our poverty was sufficient for us, that we might account it as riches, that we saw our son" (Tobias v, 25).

4. The Lord grants the desire of the poor in spirit. "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor" (Ps. ix, 38).

5. Poverty bestows on us a share of the sweetness of God. "In Thy sweetness, O God, Thou hast provided for the poor" (Ps. lxvii, 11).

6. Poverty brings spiritual exaltation. "He raiseth up the needy from the dust" (1 Kings ii, 8).

7. Poverty bestows on us the heavenly inheritance. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v, 3).

"Give ear ye islands, and hearken ye people from afar" (Isa. xlix, 1).

Many reasons convince us that the Words of God should be carefully listened to and heard, for manifold is their utility.

1. They enlighten the mind. "Because the commandment is a lamp and the law a light" (Prov. vi, 23).

2. They will fill the soul with the sweetest affections. "How sweet are Thy words to my palate; more than honey to my mouth" (Ps. cxviii, 103).

3. They kindle in the heart the fire of love. "There came in my heart as a burning fire" (Jer. xx, 9). "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried by the fire" (Ps. xi, 7).

4. They teach righteousness in conduct. "Direct me in Thy truth, and teach me" Ps. xxiv, 5).

5. They bring us to the possession of glory. " My son, forget not My law and let thy heart keep My commandments " (Prov. iii, 1).

6. They are useful to be laid to heart for the instruction of others. " All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice " (II Tim. iii, 16).

" Behold you are sold for your iniquities" (Isa. l, 1).

Consider that man sells much for sin.

1. The virtue of his soul is bartered for the dross of sin. " They have given all their precious things for food " (Lam. i, 11).

2. He barters for the passing pleasure of sin, his heavenly inheritance, instead of saying to the devil as Naboth said to Achab: " The Lord be merciful to me, and not let me give thee the inheritance of my fathers " (I Kings xxi, 3).

3. He gives up for sin the liberty of his soul, making himself the bond-slave of the devil and of sin; therefore says the Holy Ghost: " There is not a more wicked thing than the love of money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale " (Ecclus x, 10).

4. He barters away the honour of the love of God. " The Lord loveth the children of Israel, and thy look to strange gods, and love the husks of the grapes " (Osee iii, 1).

" I do not resist " (Isa. l, 5)

Many men, in various ways, resist and contradict God, and I must examine whether I am of their number.

1. Infidels, who will not believe His word, resist and contradict the divine truth. " In no wise speak against the truth; but be ashamed of the lie of thy ignorance " (Ecclus iv, 30).

2. The impatient, who will not be resigned to the Will of God, resist the divine correction; but " who hath resisted Him, and hath had peace " (Job ix, 4)? Peace can only come from entire resignation and childlike submission.

3. The impenitent resist the divine goodness. " My people shall long for my return " (Osee ii, 7).

" You shall sleep in sorrows " (Isa. l, 2).

When sinners who have not taken a delight in doing the will of God, but in gratifying their own passions and serving themselves, come to the sleep of death they are not resigned to the Will of God. God says to them, " This is done to you by My hand," but they resist, and therefore God says, " you shall sleep in sorrows."

Death brings sorrows to sinners:

1. On account of the loss of this world's goods and pleasures which they have loved. " The rich man when he shall sleep shall take away nothing with him " (Job xxvii, 19).

2. On account of the agitation of mind arising from the reproach of conscience, which makes them " groan for anguish of spirit " (Wis. v, 3).

3. On account of the despair they feel of attaining to future glory. " The crown has fallen from our head; woe unto us for we have sinned " (Lam. v, 16).

4. On account of the fear of punishment. " They were troubled, they were moved, trembling took hold of them " (Ps. xlvii, 6).

" Put on the garments of thy glory, O Jerusalem " (Isa. lii, 1).

Jerusalem is the type of the holy soul, which is the city or kingdom of God, in which He reigns supreme by grace. The saints are arrayed in God's

sight with spiritual garments in which they glory and delight.

These garments of virtue are:

1. A protection. " I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and with the robe of justice He hath covered me " (Isa. lxi, 10).

2. A means of spiritual warmth amidst the chilling atmosphere of this world, as it is said of the valiant woman in the Proverbs: " She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow, for all her domestics are clothed with double garments " (Prov. xxxi, 21).

3. An ornament in the sight of God and His angels. " I counsel thee to buy of me gold, fire tried, that thou mayest be rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments, that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear " (Apoc, iii, 18).

The garments of the soul ought always to be:

1. White, by taking care not to do any wicked action that stains their purity, as, for instance, a lie, which "is a foul blot upon a man" (Ecclus xx, 26), and Solomon says, "At all times let thy garments be white " (Eccles ix, 8).

2. Clean, by uprightness and purity of intention. " Every garment, mingled with blood, shall be burnt, and shall be food for the fire " (Isa. ix, 5).

3. Sweet smelling, good example spreading on all sides the delightful perfume of virtue. " The smell of thy garments, as the smell of frankincense" (Cant. iv, 11).

O glorious Saviour, whose garments became white as no fuller upon earth could make white, array my poor naked soul in the beautiful gar-

ments of Thy grace and virtues. Fill me with joy, and protect me from the cold of this world, ornament my soul with white garments washed clean in Thy Blood.

"Loose the bonds from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion" (Isa. lii, 2).

There are some bonds and chains by which we are made captive, from which God wills us to be free and from which He will free us, giving us instead the freedom with which Christ hath made us free, if we will do our part. We must correspond and co-operate with His grace, or we shall remain miserable captives, so He cries out to us, "Loose the bonds from off thy neck."

1. The bonds of worldly solicitude and over anxiety. "Who hath sent out the wild ass free, and who hath loosed his bonds" (Job xxxix, 5). "Be not solicitous, therefore, saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed. For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of these things" (Matt. vi, 31).

2. The bonds of carnal love. "I have found a woman more bitter than death . . . . and her hands are bands. He that pleaseth God shall escape from her; but he that is a sinner shall be caught by her" (Eccles vii, 27).

3. The bonds of wicked actions. "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death; and broke their bonds asunder" (Ps. cvi, 14). "The Lord looseth them that are fettered" (Ps. cxlv, 7).

4. The bonds of bad habit. "Woe to you that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as the rope of a cast" (Isa. v, 18).

On the other hand there are bonds from which God does not desire us to be freed but to be bound ever more and more closely, and in these bonds is true liberty found. These bonds are:

1. The bonds of charity. " I will draw them with the . . . bands of love " (Osee xi, 4).

2. The bonds of the Divine Law. " Of old time thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bands, and thou saidst, I will not serve " (Jer. ii, 20).

3. The bonds of divine teaching: of wisdom and divine instruction it is said: " Put thy feet into her fetters, and thy neck into her chains, bow down thy shoulder and bear her and be not grieved with her bands " (Ecclus vi, 25).

" To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? "
(Isa. liii, 1).

Christ Jesus our Lord is the arm of God stretched out to destroy His enemies, to support the weak and to defend the faithful.

1. To scourge the demons. " With the arm of Thy strength thou hast scattered Thy enemies " (Ps. lxxxviii, 11).

2. To support the weak. " He shall gather together the lambs with His arm " (Isa. xl, 11).

3. To defend the faithful from dangers. " With His right hand He will cover them, and with His holy arm will He defend them " (Wis. v, 17).

" The Lord has prepared His holy arm in the sight of all the Gentiles, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God " (Isa. lii, 10).

O Lord Jesus, my Saviour, Thou art the arm of God, almighty and irresistible. Blessed are they to whom Thou hast been revealed, and who fly to

Thee for protection. Defend me, O Lord, from my enemies, with "an outstretched arm"; support me with Thy holy arm for I am weak. Keep Thy hand over me in the time of danger and protect me. Amen.

"As a root out of a thirsty ground" (Isa. lii, 2).

Christ may be likened to a root:

1. Because, though all depend on Him, and all draw life from Him, He is hidden, like the root of a tree buried in the ground. "To whom hath the root of wisdom been revealed and who have known her wise counsels" (Ecclus i, 6)?

2. Because He gives to all the spiritual sap of life by which they flourish and bring forth fruit. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord. . . . he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters that spreadeth out its roots towards moisture" (Jer. xvii, 7, 8).

3. Because the root sustains the whole tree, and Christ the whole Church. "Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee" (Rom. xi, 18). "If the root be holy so are the branches" (Rom. xi, 16).

"The most abject of men" (Isa. lii, 3).

Christ Jesus, our Lord, became for us in His Passion the most abject of men:

1. On account of the bitterness of His pains. "O all ye who pass by the way attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow" (Lam. i, 12).

2. On account of the ignominy of His death. "Let us condemn Him to a most shameful death" (Wis. ii, 20). "Let us cut Him off from the land of the living, and let His name be remembered no more" (Jer. xi, 19). "He became obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross" (Phil. ii).

3. On account of the greatness of the accusations made against Him. " I am the most foolish of men, and the wisdom of men is not with me " (Prov. xxx, 2). " The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all " (Isa. liii, 6).

"A man of sorrows" (Isa. liii, 3).

What a mystery that the King of Glory, the Redeemer of the World, the Prince of Peace, whose coming was to bring joy to the whole earth, should be spoken of as beyond all others a " man of sorrows." He was full of sorrows:

1. Because of the intensity of the pains of body and soul He endured for us; and so to Him are applied the words, " From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness " in Him (Isa. i, 6).

2. Because of the outpouring of graces upon Him, for us and for our salvation. His graces and sorrows corresponded. " Of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace " (John i, 16).

3. Because of our obligation to Him. Our debt was so great to the majesty of God that He was overwhelmed by an ocean of sorrows, " that being justified by His grace, we may be heirs according to hope of life everlasting " (Titus iii, 7).

XIV
HUMILITY
(From St Thomas)

"LET nothing be done through contention or vainglory, but in humility, let each esteem others better than themselves" (Phil. ii, 3).

St Paul here exhorts us to humility, and in doing so, first warns us against things contrary to humility, and then exhorts us to humility itself.

The things contrary to humility are those arising from pride. These are twofold, contention and vainglory; contention with others, and, in our own souls, vainglory.

Contention, strife, faction are signs of pride, because the humble yield. "Among the proud there are always contentions" (Prov. xiii, 10). "Where envy and contention is, there is inconstancy and every evil work" (James iii, 16). Therefore saith the Apostle: "Let nothing be done through contention."

Another sign of pride is vainglory. For a proud man desires his own excellence in an inordinate manner, even in the opinion of others. Our Lord said of Himself, "I do not seek My own glory" (St John viii, 50). And therefore St Paul says here, "neither by vainglory."

Then follows an admonition. "In humility, let each esteem others better than themselves." For as pride makes a man raise himself in his own opinion above others, so does humility cause a man to lower himself according to right measure.

But how can one who is better do this? For either he does not know that he is better, and does not know his own virtue, and then he is not vir-

tuous, because not prudent; or he does know it, and then is not able to account another as superior to himself.

I answer this difficulty by saying that no one is so good that he has no defect, and no one is so utterly bad as to possess no good point. So that it is not necessary that he should prefer another to himself in every respect, but that he should say in his own mind thus: " Perhaps in me there is some defect that he has not got."

This is shown by St Augustine in his book *On Virginity*, where he teaches a virgin to prefer a married woman to herself because she may be more fervent. " But even given that one man were entirely good and another entirely bad, nevertheless thou and he bear a double personality, namely thyself and Christ. If, therefore, thou dost not prefer him to thyself, looked at in his own person, still thou oughtest to esteem him better than thyself on account of the divine image in him. In this way the holy Apostle in another place saith, ' Preventing (preferring) one another in honour ' (Rom. xii, 10)."

Thirdly he admonishes us to have a mutual interest one in the other, in the words, " Each one not considering the things that are his own, but those that are other men's." With this we may compare what he says in 1 Cor. xii, 25, exhorting all the members of the Body of Christ to be " mutually careful one for another "; and in 1 Cor. xiii, 5, where he teaches us of charity that " she seeketh not her own."

" Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God " (Phil. ii, 5, 6).

The Apostle now proceeds to exhort us to humility by the example of Christ. Be humble, and in order to have humility, study the mind of Christ, and have the same mind, by conforming your mind to His.

To enable us to understand better the humility of Christ St Paul first explains His majesty, reminding us that He is true God because in the form, that is, the nature, of God, having one nature with His Father, and being perfectly equal to Him and therefore He " thought it not robbery to be equal with God," being God Himself.

" But emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man." Here the Apostle speaks of the humility of Christ.

This humility is shown in the Mystery of the Incarnation and of the Passion.

As to the Incarnation, St Paul uses the strong expression:

"He emptied Himself." How was this? His fullness was in the fact that He was God. Did He then empty Himself of His Godhead, laying it aside? No, because He remained what He was; and He took what He was not; and the words, " He emptied Himself " apply to the nature He took, not to the nature He had before. In the same way, when it is said He came down from Heaven, it is not meant that He ceased to be in Heaven, but only that He began to be on earth in a new way. So also here, He emptied Himself not by laying down His Godhead, but by taking to Himself the nature of man.

There is a great beauty in the word "emptied."

For, consider, empty is opposed to full. Now the Godhead is indeed full, because in God there is all perfection of good, as God Himself said to Moses, " I will show thee all good " (Exodus xxxiii, 19). On the other hand the nature of man and the soul of man is not full, but can be filled according to its measure. As the nature of man is therefore empty, Christ is said to have emptied Himself by taking the nature of man.

St Paul proceeds to say, " Taking the form of a servant," by taking the nature of man. Man by the fact of creation is the servant of God, and the nature of man is the form of a servant. Why is it better to say " the form of a servant " than to say simply "servant"? Because by servant might be understood a human person, which was not taken by Him, but only the nature of man. The Son of God, therefore, did not take a " man," a " human person " to Himself, for then we should understand that " a man " existed separate from the Son of God, whereas in reality the Son of God was made man. He received then the nature of man to His divine Person, so that He might be together the Son of God and the Son of Man in one Person.

" Being made in the likeness of men," that is, He became truly man, born of the race of a descendant of Abraham and David. " It behoveth Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren " (Heb. ii, 17).

If you object that Christ did not take the species of man, it is true that He did not in this sense, that His divine and human natures did not become one human nature. If that had been the case His divine nature would have been changed. But His divine

and human natures were united in one Person, and He was Man, but not " a man," not being a human person.

" In habit found as a man," by which is indicated the condition of His human nature. He took to Himself all the defects and properties fitted to the likeness of man, except sin. And, therefore, " in habit He was found as a man," that is in exterior life, for as man He hungered, as man He was weary, and in many other things " found as a man." So it is said, " He was tempted in all things like as we are, without sin " (Heb. iv, 15), and " afterwards He was seen on earth and conversed with men" (Baruch iii, 38). In this way the word " habit " may be understood to refer to exterior appearances and ways of life. Or we may understand the word " habit " in this sense that Christ received human nature as a habit that He wore. A habit is fourfold. One kind changes the person who has it, but is not changed itself, as a fool by wisdom. Another kind of habit is both changed itself and changes the possessor, as, for example, food. Another kind neither changes nor is changed, for instance, a ring. A fourth kind is that, like raiment, which is changed, but does not change the wearer.

And, according to this similitude, human nature in Christ is said to be a habit, which, when assumed by the Divine Person, did not change it, but was itself changed into what was better, because it was changed into " grace and truth " (John, i, 14). St Paul, therefore, says, He was made in the likeness of men, in such a way, however, as not to be changed Himself, because in habit He was found as man.

From the use of this word *habit* some heresies have arisen.

1. The first error is that as the word habit is used, it is implied that the human nature came to Christ by way, not of a substance, but as a mere accident; but this is false, for the " Suppositum "* of the Divine nature remains as the " suppositum " of the assumed human nature, and, therefore, the human nature was assumed to Him not as an accident, but as a substance, not that He had not a Divine nature, but that the human nature can be substantially predicated of Him.

And through this doctrine is refuted the error of Photinus, who asserted that Christ was a mere man, not born of a Virgin. For St Paul says, " When He was in the form of God," therefore clearly implying that He had the nature of God before He took the form of a servant, by which He is less than the Father. It is shown, also, that by being in the form of a servant, He merited.

Also St Paul here refutes the error of Arius, who asserted that Christ (as a Person) was less than the Father, for, if so, it would have been robbery to claim to be equal to God.

Moreover, the teaching of Nestorius is shown to be false. Nestorius asserted that the two natures were united by indwelling of the divine in the human, namely, that the Godhead dwelt in the human person of Christ, and that the Son of Man

* The word " suppositum " has no English equivalent that I know of. It is the Latin for *ὑποστασις*, and means a substance complete in itself, capable of independent action. Every suppositum is a substance, but every substance is not a suppositum. In man there are many substances, but one suppositum. A person means the suppositum of a rational being.

was different from the Son of God. But then He could not have taken the form of a servant, but only have dwelt in a servant, as He does in us (Heb. iii, 6), whereas Rabanus remarks that the Apostle calls the Incarnation an emptying, " He emptied Himself." If, then, the Father and Holy Ghost dwelt in the human person, surely they could not be said to empty themselves, because they did not become man.

Notice, also, that St Paul says, " He emptied Himself." By this expression we see that the Person emptying Himself and the Person emptied are the same.

This is the Son of God, because He emptied Himself, therefore the union is in Person.

By this teaching, then, of St Paul, the error of Eutyches is also refuted. He asserted that by the Incarnation the double nature of God and man were made one. But in that case surely He did not " take the form of a servant."

Finally, St Paul's words show the Valentinian heresy to be false. Valentine taught that Christ brought a body from Heaven, just as Apollinaris asserted that our Lord had not a soul, yet according to neither of these ideas could He have been made in the likeness of men.

" He humbled Himself," etc.

Thus does St Paul speak of the humility that Christ showed in His Passion.

He was man, the greatest of men, because the same Person was God and man, and nevertheless He humbled Himself (Ecclus, iii, 20). The way of humiliation, and the sign of humiliation, is obedience, for it is the nature of pride to make a man follow his own will. The reason is that a proud

man seeks what is high and exalted. Now the very nature of what is high and exalted is that it should be independent of another, ruling itself and others, consequently obedience is contrary to pride.

Therefore, St Paul, desiring to prove the perfect union of the humility and the Passion of Christ, says that " He became obedient," because if He had not taken on Himself obedience, He could not have been so worthy of praise.

But in what way was He made obedient? Not in the Divine Will, for that is the very rule of obedience itself, but in His human will, which was in all things regulated by the Will of the Father (Matt. xxvi, 39).

And how fitting it is that obedience should be found in His Passion, for the first falling away of man from God was the effect of disobedience (Rom. v, 17).

How worthy of praise was the obedience of Christ, for obedience is the greater when the command of another is followed at the cost of self-will. Now, the movement of the will of man tends to two things, viz., to life and honour. Yet Christ did not refuse death (1 Pet. iii, 18); nor did He fly from disgrace and ignominy. So it is that St Paul says that He was obedient, " even to the death of the cross," the supreme ignominy (Wis. ii, 20). Neither did He refuse death nor the most disgraceful kind of death.

XV

ON VAINGLORY

St Thomas de Malo Inq.; Sum. 2, 2, 132

(1) Is vainglory a sin?

That it is a sin, we may conclude from St John, v, 44, for that must be a sin which keeps men away from God. We draw near to God by faith; but vainglory keeps men from faith, and so from God. "How can you believe who receive glory from each other, and the glory which is from God you do not seek."

Two questions present themselves:

1. What is glory?
2. What is vainglory?

1. What is glory?

St Augustine defines it as "Clear knowledge with praise." Glory implies that certain qualities or actions of a man are known and admired, thus gaining for him some moral brightness before men.

The desire of glory in itself is not sinful, so long as it is for a good motive and of the right kind. If glory had been wrong in itself our Lord would not have said, "Let your light shine before men" (St Matt. v, 16). It is, therefore, not the desire for glory but for vainglory that is sinful; it is always vicious to seek a vain thing, as the Holy Ghost says, "Why lovest thou vanity and why seekest thou a lie?" (Ps. iv.)

2. When is glory vain?

1. On account of the object. If we seek glory on account of things that do not deserve it, of any frail and passing thing. If a man gloried in sin, or in mere worthless and passing things, e.g., per-

sonal beauty; if we glory in things that are worthless before God (Jer. ix, 23).

2. On account of the person from whom we desire praise, namely, from man, whose judgement is so changeful and passing, instead of seeking approval from God. " How can you believe, who receive glory one from another, and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek" (St John v, 44). This kind of vainglory prevented the Pharisees, so observant in externals, from believing in Jesus Christ. " For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God " (St John xii, 43).

3. Glory is vain from a man desiring it not for the honour of God or for the good of his neighbour, but for the selfish end of his own pleasure and satisfaction.

When true glory is sought for things really deserving praise, and from Him who can give true praise, and when the desire springs from the love of God and of others for God's sake, it is good and praiseworthy.

Men might object that it cannot be wrong to desire and seek glory, because in doing so we imitate God (Eph. v, 1). For in seeking glory man imitates God, who seeks glory from men (Isa. xliii, 7). If, then, God seeks glory from man, why may not we do the same?

Now pride consists in the inordinate love of our own excellence, by extolling ourselves above what we deserve. But He who is above all cannot extol Himself above what He is. When men see and acknowledge God's excellence it profits them, not God. And no one knoweth Him unless as far as He maketh known His own excellence. If we had anything that really deserved praise belonging to and

coming from ourselves, it would not be wrong to desire praise for it. We have nothing that we have not received; the glory is due, then, to Him who gives it.

As praise to God adds nothing substantially to Him, but only profits us, God seeks glory from us not for His own sake but for ours. In like manner, it would be praiseworthy in a man to seek approbation for the sake of others. So our Lord bids us, " Let our light so shine before men that they may glorify our Father who is in heaven."

The desire of glory and honour incites men to good deeds; it is a powerful motive for good. This is well known by experience, and, therefore, honour is promised to those who distinguish themselves, e.g., V.C. is given for bravery, courage, self-sacrifice for others on the field of battle, etc. So, too, the Scriptures often offer glory and honour as the reward of goodness, e.g. Rom. ii, 7.

How then can we say that it is wrong to desire and labour for it?

The answer evidently is that the glory which we have from God is not vain but true. And this true glory is promised as a reward for good works (2 Cor. x, 17).

When God says, " Well done, thou good and faithful servant," this is not vain but true glory. It is quite true that men are often incited to do good things by hope of human praise as they are from the hope and desire of other earthly rewards. But he is not truly virtuous who does works of virtue for human glory and the praise of men (St Augustine. De Civ. Dei lib. v, c. 12).

Does not the Holy Ghost say, " Take care of a good name; for this shall continue with thee, more

than a thousand treasures, precious and great" (Ecclus xli, 15)? And does not St Paul tell us to provide "good things .... in the sight of all men" (Rom. xii, 17)?

How then can the desire of praise be wrong?

The answer is that a man ought to desire those things that make him more perfect. Now the more a man knows himself, the more perfect he is, but it does not make for perfection to be known by others, and therefore it should not be desired in itself and for its own sake. But it can lawfully be desired, if it be really useful for any reason, either that God may be praised by other men, or that men may grow better on account of the good they see in a man, or that the man himself seeing, by the testimony and praise of others, certain good in himself, may strive to persevere in it and increase in virtue.

And in this way it is good to have a care to preserve a good name and reputation, but it is not right to do so in order to take vain delight in the empty praise of men, for its own sake.

Vainglory, then, is wrong because the soul of man, who ought, if he glories at all, to "glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth God" (Jer. ix, 24), glories instead in worthless and vain things:

(*a*) Either in things that do not really exist, and this belongs to false deceit;

(*b*) Or in earthly, passing things, and this belongs to mere covetousness;

(*c*) Or in the opinion of men, whose judgement is uncertain, and this belongs to imprudence.

Vainglory is opposed to the virtue of magnanimity, which makes a soul despise mere vain and

empty honour, and desire and labour for true and real honour. The magnanimous man cares little for worldly honour, which is small and passing, common to good and bad, while he values highly and desires true and solid honour in God's sight, which is eternal. And though God Himself is his first aim, honour from God is his secondary desire.

Cicero declares vainglory to be opposed to magnanimity, for *de officiis* (*lib.* 1) he writes, "We should fly from the desire of glory; since it takes away our freedom, the one aim of noble minds."

Vainglory is contrary to magnanimity because that virtue makes a man indifferent to worthless honours, while vainglory makes him delight in them. The vain man glories in those things that a noble mind thinks little of and despises.

(2) Is vainglory always a mortal sin?

It might appear so from St Matt. vi, 1, where it is declared to deprive us of our eternal reward. Also because it takes away from God that which is His due (Isa. xlii, 8; 1 Tim. i, 17); hence St John Chrysostom says of it that, " it enters the soul in a hidden way, and takes away insensibly all that is within."

But vainglory is only mortal when it is completely and directly opposed to charity.

That sin is mortal which is contrary to perfect charity. But the sin of vainglory, considered in itself, does not seem opposed to the love of our neighbour.

But in two ways it may be contrary to our love for God.

1. In the first place when the matter about which a man glories is opposed directly to the love of God.

(*a*) When a man glories about something false which is opposed to the reverence due to God, " Thy heart is lifted up and thou hast said I am God " (Ezech. xxviii, 2, also 1 Cor. iv, 7).

(*b*) When a man prefers some mere temporal good in which he glories (Jer. ix, 23).

(*c*) Also when a man prefers the testimony and approbation of man to that of God, as it is written of the Jews that they loved " the glory of men more than the glory of God " (St John xii, 43).

2. In the second place, when the man who glories makes the glory of men his ultimate and chief end to which he directs even works of virtue, and to obtain which he would do things that are opposed to God's law. If he is ready to gain glory before men even at the cost of a mortal sin, clearly he would be making vainglory his last end. This, of course, would be nothing else than a mortal sin (St John v, 44).

But when the love of human glory, however vain and empty, does not oppose charity, neither in the matter about which a man glories, nor in the intention of the man seeking glory, it is not then a mortal, but a venial sin.

Sin, however small, cannot merit eternal life, and so a virtuous act loses all power of meriting if it be done altogether from a motive of vainglory.

But when a man loses life eternal altogether, and not merely the merit of a particular act, then that vainglory must amount to a mortal sin.

Not every one who consents to vainglory and desires it, desires that excellence which belongs to God only. He may only desire the glory which is due to a virtuous, a brave, a learned or a rich man.

(3) Vainglory is a capital sin, because it is the root, principle and cause of many other sins.

St Gregory reckons it as a capital vice. He considers pride as the queen of all vices, and vainglory which springs from it as a capital sin.

Commonly, however, pride is considered as the capital sin. Vainglory is closely allied to it and springs from it.

Pride is the inordinate, unrestrained, unruly desire of excellence. Vainglory the desire of that empty applause in the eyes of men that comes from excellence, real or fictitious.

St Gregory enumerates seven daughters born from vainglory—an evil and abominable litter of an evil dam.

They are: Disobedience, boasting, hypocrisy, contention, obstinacy, discord and pride in novelties.

We call vices, the object of which are to bring about the end of some other vice, the daughters of that vice. They are born to promote the mother vice.

Now the object and end of vainglory is the manifestation of our own excellence. To this end a man may tend in a twofold way:

1. *Directly*, either by *words*, and this is called boasting (Prov. xxvii, 1, 2).

Or by *actions*. If these actions be true, things that really are worthy of praise, it is *novitatum praesumptio*, that is, glory coming from new opinions, new way of putting things, new inventions (not in itself mortal), or, if these actions be *not true*, then it is hypocrisy, pretending something to gain vain praise.

2. *Indirectly*.

A man endeavours to show forth his excellence

indirectly by showing that he is not less than others in four ways:

(*a*) In intellectual things, and in this way he becomes, through vainglory, *obstinate*. This makes him sustain inordinately his own opinion, being unwilling to yield to a better judgement.

(*b*) In the will. Vainglory then produces *discord*, by making a man so resolved to do his own will, and not to yield to others, that quarrels and disagreement ensue.

(*c*) In speech. Contention then arises. " Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vainglory " (Phil. ii, 3).

This makes men contend together by words, and often loudly and with strong expressions, violence taking the place of argument. A man feels that the arguments of another are valid and unanswerable, but vainglory will not let him yield and say, " You are right, I was wrong," and so he cries out, uses strong language, abuses the other man. How often this is the case in controversy. " He shall not cry," says the Holy Ghost of our Lord, " nor have respect to persons, neither shall His voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flax He shall not quench " (Isa. xlii, 2, 3).

(*d*) In actions. Vain glory in actions is the mother of *disobedience*. This is when a man fears to lose glory by submitting to and doing the will of another instead of his own will.

Truly a foul progeny of an evil mother!

XVI

HOW THE SOUL OF CHRIST COULD SUFFER*

ST THOMAS III[a], question 46, article 8, asks: "Did the whole soul of Christ during His Passion enjoy the Beatific Vision?"

He begins with three difficulties. (1) It would seem that the soul of Christ during His Passion did not enjoy the whole Beatific Vision. For it is impossible at the same time to grieve and rejoice. As therefore the whole soul of Christ suffered pain in His Passion, it was not possible for it to enjoy the Beatific Vision.

Again (2), Sorrow and sadness, if vehement, not only prevent the opposite pleasure, but any kind of delight. Since then the sorrow of Christ's Passion was the greatest possible in this world, He could not at the same time have enjoyed the Vision of God which excludes grief.

(3) The Vision of God is according to the knowledge and love of divine things possessed by him who enjoys it. But all the powers of the soul are needed to know and love God. Therefore the whole soul of Christ could not have enjoyed the Vision of God.

Yet, on the other hand, the divine nature of Christ allowed the flesh to do and to suffer what belonged to it. St John Damascene says, "Therefore, in like manner, as it was proper to the soul of Christ inasmuch as He was blessed to enjoy the divine vision, His Passion did not stand in the way of the divine vision."

In answer we must say (continues St Thomas)

* The following pages were written in answer to a correspondent who felt unable to understand how the soul of Christ could suffer whilst still enjoying the Beatific Vision.

that the whole soul can stand for either its nature or its powers.

If its nature is meant, then the whole soul enjoyed the happiness of the beatific vision, that is to say, the higher portion of the soul, which alone can enjoy the vision of God.

But if its powers are understood, then the whole soul did not enjoy the happiness of the beatific vision: not indeed directly, because the enjoyment of the beatific vision does not belong to any part or faculty of the soul, but to its very substance; nor even indirectly through the overflow of glory, because while Christ was yet in this world His glory was not permitted to overflow to the soul nor to the body. On the other hand, the higher part of the soul was not impeded by the lower in its own sphere. Therefore, the higher part of the soul of Christ suffering, perfectly enjoyed the Divine Vision.

To the first difficulty the answer is that the joy of the Vision is not directly contrary to the grief or pain of the Passion, for they are not about the same object, and nothing prevents contrary things existing side by side if they are not contrary in the same sense. Hence the enjoyment of the Vision of God can exist in the higher part of the soul, and the sorrow of the Passion in the lower part.

To the second difficulty the answer is that acute sorrow and pain prevent any pleasure, by reason of the overflow which naturally takes place from one power of the soul to the other. But this did not take place in Christ.

To the third the answer is that this is true of the powers of the soul, but not of its essence, i.e., the substance of the soul.

So it was part of the arrangement and economy of the Incarnation that the overflow of joy which would naturally have taken place from the higher part of the soul to the lower was prevented, just as it was prevented overflowing to the body and making it a glorified body, as happened for a time at the Transfiguration. The " how " is part of the mystery of the Incarnation. The Fourteenth question of St Thomas " on the Incarnation," treats of the defects of body assumed by the Son of God, and four questions are put: (*a*), Whether God the Son assumed or took to Himself any defects of body in His human nature. Answer: Yes, it was fitting that God the Son should take a Body subject to human infirmities and thus able to suffer, so that in His human nature He might suffer and be tempted, and so help us (Isa. liii). For this St Thomas gives three reasons: 1, Because the Son of God made Man came into the world that He might satisfy for the sins of men; 2, To establish the truth of the Incarnation, because if His body had been unable to suffer men would not have believed it to be a real body; 3, As an example of patience (Heb. x, 11).

This was not through necessity, in the sense that He could not have done otherwise; but it was necessary for the objects He had in view in the Incarnation.

In us these defects are the result of sin, in Christ they were voluntarily assumed out of love.

Christ did not take *all* our defects of body, for Christ took human defects in body in order to satisfy for the sins of human nature, for which satisfaction it was necessary that He should have the perfection of knowledge and grace in His soul.

Only those defects, therefore, did it befit Christ to take which follow as a consequence from the common sin of the whole human nature, and yet at the same time are not inconsistent with the perfection of wisdom and grace. So it would not have been fitting for Him to take ignorance, inclination to evil, difficulty in doing good. There are other defects that are not the common lot of human nature on account of the sin of our first parents, but have in certain men particular causes, such as leprosy, the falling sickness and other things of the same nature. Sometimes these defects arise from a man's own fault, for instance from self-indulgence in eating and drinking, sometimes from weak constitution; neither could find place in Christ; for His body was conceived by the Holy Ghost who is infinite in wisdom and power, unable to err or fail, nor could Christ, being perfect, have anything inordinate in His life. But other defects there are which are found in all men from the sin of our first parents, as death, hunger, thirst, and things of this kind. These defects Christ did take; they are natural, shared by all men, and they are not inconsistent with perfect wisdom and grace. As to defects of soul, in Question Fifteen, St Thomas asks whether Christ assumed any.

1. Christ our Lord did not and could not assume any sinful defect, either original or actual (John viii, 46), for Christ took our infirmities, (*a*) that He might make satisfaction for us, (*b*) that He might prove the truth of His human nature, (*c*) that He might give us an example. But sin could do none of these. It could not satisfy or be a proof of human nature, as sin is not necessary for

human nature, but rather contrary to it; and sin could not be an example of virtue (1 Peter ii, 22).

2. Nor did Christ assume what theologians call the *fomes peccati*, that is, fleshly lust. For Christ, as man, had grace and all virtues most perfectly. Now moral virtue which is in the irrational part of the soul makes it subject to reason, and the more perfect the virtue the more entire the subjection; for example, temperance keeps the sensual faculty in subjection, and fortitude the irascible faculty. In the idea of the *fomes* or fuel of sin is included the inclination of the sensual appetite to that which is against reason. It follows, therefore, that the more perfect grace is, the more the fuel of sin is weakened. Since, therefore, in Christ there was virtue the most perfect possible, there was no fuel of sin. This defect was not necessary to make satisfaction, but rather the reverse.

3. Was ignorance assumed by Christ? No, for He is full of wisdom and knowledge.

4. Was the soul of Christ able to suffer? Were there passions in Him?

A soul united to a body can suffer in two ways.

(*a*) By a corporal suffering through an injury to the body. The soul and body make one being, and so the body being injured the soul feels. The body of Christ could suffer, so could His soul.

(*b*) What are called the passions (sorrow, love, fear, etc.) affect the soul in its own operation, or at least the soul more than the body. The passions are the affections of the sensitive appetite. These Christ had, but in a different way from us: (1) in us these passions often have unlawful objects, but never in Christ; (2), in us the motion of the passions of the sensitive appetite often precedes the

judgement of reason, but never in Christ. In Him every movement of the sensitive appetite was according to reason; (3), The motions of passions often darken reason and carry us away to things contrary to reason, for example, anger, fear, etc. But never in Christ. In Him reason was always absolute master. A passion rules the soul, but a "propassion" is the name given to that which goes no further than the sensitive appetite. In Christ there were only propassions.

5. Was there true pain? Yes, as Isaias writes (liii, 4).

For true sensible pain there must be the injury to the body and the consciousness of that injury. But the body of Christ could be injured because it was mortal (as has been shown above), nor was the sense or feeling of the injury wanting, because the soul of Christ had all its natural powers perfectly. Therefore without doubt Christ had true pain.

You might object that the delight in contemplating divine things lessens pain, whence the martyrs bore their pains out of the sweetness of the love of God. But the soul of Christ had the full Beatific Vision. Therefore He could not feel any pain. We answer: By virtue of the divinity of Christ, His blessedness was so constrained in His soul that it did not overflow into His body lest it should take away the mortality of His body. In the same way the delight of contemplation was so retained in His mind that it did not overflow to the sensible powers lest He might not be able to suffer. In this we see His love. He dispensed Himself in order to suffer; we desire dispensations not to suffer.

6. Was there sorrow in Christ? Surely not, for

does not Isaias say "He shall not be sad" (xlii, 4)?

On the contrary, in St Matt. xxvi, Christ Himself says: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."

It has already been said that the delight of divine blessedness was so retained by dispensation in the mind of Christ that it did not overflow to the sensitive powers, that the pain of the senses might not be excluded. But as sensible pain is in the sensitive appetite, so is sorrow. Yet there is a difference in the motive or object of pain and of sorrow. For the object and motive of pain is an injury perceived by the sense of touch, as when a man is wounded; but the object and motive of sorrow is a hurt or evil interiorly apprehended either by the reason or the imagination, as when a man grieves for the loss of grace or of money. Now the soul of Christ could interiorly apprehend a thing as hurtful, both in relation to Himself as His Passion and death was, or in relation to others, as the sins of His disciples. And as in Christ there could be true pain, so also could there be true sorrow and grief. But as sorrow is a passion the three differences noted above must be remembered, about passions in us being propassions in Him. When Isaias speaks he means the true passion of sorrow which was not in Christ as in us.

7. Could Christ be astonished?

In one sense certainly not. For real wonder arises from the fact that a man sees an effect and does not know the cause. He cannot explain the how and the why, and becomes astonished. In this sense Christ, who knows all, could never be surprised.

Yet in another sense he could, for St Mat-

thew says: "And Jesus hearing this marvelled" (viii, 10).

The answer is, that admiration in the true and strict sense means as regards some new and unwonted thing. To Christ nothing could be new or strange, for by His divine knowledge He knew, even as man, all things in God; even by His human knowledge He knew things by infused wisdom. Still something could be new and strange to His knowledge derived from experience, according to which He could find new ideas day by day. Therefore if we speak of His divine knowledge as God, or of His knowledge as man through the Beatific Vision, or of His infused knowledge, there could not be in Him any wonder or astonishment. Nothing could take Him by surprise. But if we consider only His knowledge from experience, then we can say that he could be astonished. He voluntarily assumed this for our instruction, that we might wonder at that which He permitted to cause Him to wonder.

8. Was Christ ever angry?

At first sight we should say no. For " the anger of man worketh not the justice of God" (St James i, 20), and everything in Christ belongs to God's justice. Moreover anger is opposed to meekness, and Christ was meekness itself.

Again, St Gregory says that " Anger as a vice blinds the eye of the mind; and anger in the sense of zeal disturbs it." Yet in Christ the eye of the mind could neither be blinded nor disturbed. Still, on the other hand, St John tells us (ii, 17) that in Him was fulfilled the words of the Psalm: " the zeal of Thy house has eaten me up " (Ps. lxviii).

The answer is that anger is the effect of sorrow.

For from some sorrow a man begins to desire to resist and repel the injury done to himself or to others. And so anger is a passion made up of sorrow and desire of revenge.

Now we have already seen that in Christ there was sorrow. We have then to ask whether there was also desire of revenge? The desire of revenge is sinful when a man seeks to revenge himself against right reason, i.e., merely from blind passion. In this sense anger could not be in Christ, for this is anger as a vice.

But sometimes this desire of revenge is without sin, nay, is even praiseworthy, when a man, for instance, desires revenge or punishment on another according to real justice; and this is called anger through zeal. In English we should call the first anger or angry passion; the second indignation, just indignation. This last was in Christ, but of course always under absolute control, never disturbing the eye of the mind, always servant, never master.

What then should we answer to the three objections?

1. Anger worketh not the justice or righteousness of God. Anger is found in men in two ways. Sometimes it goes before the judgement of reason, and carries away reason into action. In this case anger works as master. So the anger of man worketh not the justice of God. At other times anger follows and obeys reason and is its instrument, and then the action, which is in the order of justice, is not the effect of anger, but of reason. In this sense we are angry with a murderer we have never seen, and wish him hanged.

2. The blind passion of anger, when master, is

opposed to meekness; but not indignation, that is moderate anger, governed by reason.

3. In us, according to the general rule, owing to our imperfection, the powers of the soul impede one another, so that when the action of one power is intense, the action of another is weakened. Thus it happens that the movement of anger, even when governed by reason, obscures more or less the vision of the soul. But in Christ each power of His human soul could have its own full action, without in the least interfering with the action of any other power. Therefore, as the delight of His mind seeing God did not prevent sorrow and pain in the lower part of His soul, so also, on the other hand, the passions of the lower part in no way impeded or obscured the act of reason.

9. Is Christ at the same time a *Viator* and a *Comprehensor* (1 Cor. ix, 24; Phil. iii, 12)?

A *Viator*, pilgrim, wayfarer, is one on his way to God, his end; tending towards final blessedness. A *Comprehensor* means one that has arrived at his end (God), and rests in Him, his pilgrimage over.

At first sight it appears impossible for Christ as Man to be both; for how could He at the same time have arrived and yet not have arrived?

The ultimate blessedness of man affects body as well as soul.

It is to see and enjoy God in a body risen, spiritual, and in power, in glory, in incorruption (1 Cor. xv).

Christ in His mortal life saw God fully, and so He had complete blessedness so far as it is proper to the soul.

But in another way He had not complete blessed-

ness, because both His soul could suffer sorrow and pain, and His body was mortal and capable of suffering.

Therefore He was a *Comprehensor* inasmuch as He had the complete blessedness in the soul; and a *Viator* inasmuch as He tended to complete blessedness in those ways in which He had it not.

It would, of course, be impossible for any one to have arrived and not arrived at the same thing in the same way; you could not be resting at the end and moving towards the end, yet a man may know certain things and still in other things he may be learning.

So Christ in His higher soul had already reached His end; but in the lower part of His soul and in the body was still out on the way.

He was, therefore, when on earth, as Man in His human nature, both a *Viator* and a *Comprehensor* at the same time.

When Christ said, " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? " there was no difference at least in kind, though perhaps in degree. The perfect Beatific Vision remained as always. The desolation as far as He spoke of Himself was only in the lower part of His soul and in the body. But did He not speak also of His Mystical Body, identifying Himself with those lost? Christ and His Members are one Christ.—Those falling into mortal sin, are His Members, Himself; they oppose God, and after a time, at least, are forsaken by God and lost for ever. Did He not include them in the word ME?

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